

*Supply—Pensions—Veterans*

mate, who have seen service in a theatre of actual war; five thousand of this number are likely to benefit under the new amendments to the War Veterans' Allowance Act. There remain approximately ten thousand men who cannot be classified as unfit or partly fit, for whom no provision is made. I would point out the large percentage of these men suffer from disabilities or handicaps as a result of service for which no satisfactory yardstick can be found in existing pensions legislation or in the War Veterans' Allowance Act. There are, for instance, those men who enlisted early in life and sacrificed the formative years of their life, who were unable to gain skill in any trade or vocation, whose educational progress was interrupted, and who since then have never had any opportunity to gain a secure foothold in the economic life of the country. These men suffered more than any other class during the depths of the depression. There are men in this group to-day who are classified as being "too old at forty," who for various reasons are not wanted in our industrial enterprises. They are more or less derelict, drifting, forgotten and unwanted. This report brings these facts to the attention of parliament in a very concise form.

The central issue at stake with regard to the main recommendation is, as has well been pointed out by the hon. member for Vancouver South. Shall the federal government assume additional responsibility with regard to those who are classified as non-pensionable or not eligible under the War Veterans' Allowance Act, and who yet, by reason of war service, are unable to secure gainful employment? I think the tragic feature of the situation is that the minister definitely rejects the main recommendation of the commission, though on several occasions previously he has admitted the existence of this problem in all its most serious aspects, and yet he has not presented to the house any satisfactory alternative as a solution of this problem.

The minister in a statement on the 17th instant, in rejecting this recommendation for a provisional economic allowance, made the definite point that there was little agreement among the organizations of ex-service men. I am bound to point out that the disagreement to which he referred was only with regard to details as to the recommendation. Practically all the national organizations were in agreement as to the principle that the federal government should accept responsibility now for the welfare of unemployed, fit ex-service men.

I think a word should be said here, because of remarks previously made by the

[Mr. MacNeil.]

minister, as to the attitude of the national organizations of ex-service men. They have painstakingly gathered together evidence with regard to this problem and presented it in a reasonable way to the government. All their proposals have been reasonable. There has been no attempt to create artificially a problem or to foster a general grievance. I think it should be recognized that in their representations, arising from conclusions reached in the units across Canada, they are under great pressure because of the need that exists in all these communities. At every meeting that I have attended of ex-service men I have found pathetic evidence of a large number of men in distress appealing to these organizations for definite aid, and only through these organizations do they find channels of negotiation. Those who serve in the national executives of these organizations do so only because of a desire to assist their less fortunate comrades and at the same time reconcile that service with the public interest.

Coupled with the rejection of the main recommendation of the commission on economic allowance, I am distressed to note the reduction in the provision for special employment projects. The minister has said that while he could not accept on behalf of the federal government any further responsibility for the extension of relief to unemployed, fit ex-service men, nevertheless the government was prepared to accept a full measure of responsibility with regard to provision of employment facilities. There is as yet no evidence that this particular phase of the work will be extended in a manner that will deal adequately with the situation. In this regard I think we should note the position of the local honorary committees. Within those committees there have been recruited representative business men, and I fear that unless adequate funds are provided for the projects outlined by them, there will be a sense of let-down; they will be disappointed and discouraged, and never again will their cooperation be secured for work of this sort.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that ex-service men are at a special disadvantage when unemployed, particularly when it becomes necessary for them to apply for relief. Everywhere I find, as the hon. member for Vancouver South has found, evidence that the municipalities are inclined to refer ex-service men back to the department, to deny any responsibility and to say that they should be provided for by the federal department. Day after day I receive letters from men and meet men who seem to be kicked about from pillar to post. They are told, if they apply for work on the relief projects,