

which time a new body, the Pension Review Board, was created. It had never existed before. The tenure of the members of that Board was set at five years, more or less by way of experiment. We have now had four or five years' experience with it, and we find that it would result in more continuity if there were a longer term of office, and if two extra members were appointed to the Pension Review Board so that it could divide itself into committees in order to deal with these matters more expeditiously.

As I pointed out to Senator Phillips, there is no direct benefit to the veterans in extending the term of office of the members of the Pension Review Board, except that we hope doing so will shorten the time the veteran will have to wait for a decision on his pension.

Senator Smith (Colchester): I thank the honourable senator for his endeavour to enlighten me. I am sorry, but I have not been able to see that light in the fullness with which he hoped I would. I do not find the idea of continuity necessarily good, unless what has been happening in the past has been good. What I am really asking is: What guarantee is there, or what reason is there for us to believe that what has been happening in the past has been good enough for us to continue the tenure of these persons, rather than seek new persons in order to bring new ideas and new concepts to the offices.

Senator Carter: The answer to that is that it takes a member of the Board at least two years to become familiar with the act and the precedents, and to acquire the experience that enables him to serve on the Board efficiently. If he has only three years left after that, then his expertise is lost. If, on the other hand, his tenure is extended to ten years, then not only do we retain the expertise, but we have the further benefit of the continued build-up of experience over that tenure.

Senator Smith (Colchester): Would the honourable senator not agree that that depends entirely on whether the lessons learned are sufficiently good; and would he not agree that it might be of salutary benefit to dispense with the services of people whose work is unsatisfactory?

Senator Carter: I am not Solomon. I do not know what the honourable senator means by "good". Is a decision good when it is in accord with his own opinion, and bad when it is not? If that is what he means, that is a poor basis for judging whether a decision is good or bad.

Senator Smith (Colchester): I compliment the honourable senator on his ingenuity. However, I should like to ask him whether the difficulty of correlating medical reports of service, which took place some 40 years ago, with present disability is not something which deserves the careful consideration of the legislature and the Pension Commission. Surely that argument ought not to be put forward as an excuse for failing to do justice to a veteran who, because of his own courage and determination to get along on his own in the past, has not devoted sufficient attention to creating records for future use.

Senator Carter: That is a common complaint and it does have some validity. Veterans, like the rest of us, are human, and some of them swing the lead and still build up their

records. Every time they have a toothache they run to the M.O. and get some documentation for it, and thus build up a voluminous record. On the other hand, another veteran may not take any action at all and, therefore, does not build up any record, and, finally, when it comes time to apply for a pension he finds himself handicapped because he has no documentation. That is a fact of life, but I do not see how anyone can remedy it. We are referring to something which happened 40 or 50 years ago.

If a veteran was in A-1 condition when he was admitted into any of the services, but upon his discharge was not in that same condition, then I would take the stand that the difference must be concluded to be the result of his military service and he should be eligible at that point. However, that is not written into the act, and the Pension Commission is bound by what is in the act. Perhaps what you are really asking for is a change in the philosophy of the Pension Act itself.

Senator Smith (Colchester): Would it not be reasonable to ask the honourable senator, when we are asked to amend the act by extending the tenure of the members of the Pension Review Board, to consider the philosophy and what might benefit those who are deserving of our careful consideration?

Senator Carter: I do not think I can add much to what I have already said. I do not determine the policy. If you want to examine the policy, the proper place to do so is in committee.

Senator Smith (Colchester): Well, the honourable gentleman is asking us to approve on second reading the principle of the bill. Surely, the principle of the bill concerns policy. However, if the honourable gentleman confesses his inadequacy to deal with the matter, I accept that.

Senator Walker: No offence!

Senator Grosart: Honourable senators, may I ask a question? Did I correctly hear the sponsor of the bill say that it takes two years for a member of the Pension Review Board to familiarize himself with the act and the precedents? Did I hear that correctly?

Senator Carter: What I said, I said extemporaneously. I did not have notes. However, I did say that it takes at least two years for a member to familiarize himself with the act and the precedents which have been built up and with the procedures involved. There are various factors to be taken into consideration when adjudicating a veteran's pension. There is much to be learned, and it must be learned by experience. It cannot be learned from a textbook.

Senator Flynn: Until then, his decisions are rather inadequate.

Senator Smith (Queens-Shelburne): Not at all.

Senator Flynn: Does he make decisions in the meantime?

Senator Smith (Queens-Shelburne): Come off it!

Senator Croll: Let's get on with it.

Senator Flynn: Well, explain that, Senator Smith. Come on! Motion agreed to and bill read second time.