

I say that this is peculiarly a matter for the Government to consider. The Government itself had not the opportunity to give proper consideration to the measure. I know that. I know it not only from the statement made by my honourable friend as leader of the Government, but also from other sources which are equally authoritative. Therefore I say to my honourable friend that the Government, instead of seeking to place the onus of amending this Bill upon the Senate, which has done the very best it could on behalf of the men, should at once make a statement throwing upon the Commission the responsibility of having brought down the report in the dying hours of the Session and of having given no opportunity even to the Government itself to digest it properly. Under these circumstances I think it is not at all unreasonable that we insist upon our amendments.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: Honourable gentlemen, I do not intend to divide the House on this motion of my honourable friend; yet it is perhaps necessary for me to explain the situation as I see it. I cannot pass judgment upon the supposed dilatoriness of the Royal Commissioners in making their report, because if I were asked at this moment when they did make the report upon which this Bill is based, I could not answer the question. But I do know that in the early part of the Session the House of Commons appointed a Committee. Perhaps it is the same Committee that worked upon the matter in the previous Session.

Hon. Sir JAMES LOUGHEED: No, it is a new Committee every year.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: A Committee was appointed to examine into the Pension Act and other matters affecting the returned men. That Committee sat for weeks and weeks. Did it spend considerable time on the matters referred to it? Did it press on its work? I do not know. I did not follow the work of the Committee. However, I desire to acquit the Government of having sprung this legislation upon Parliament. The House of Commons Committee, composed largely of returned men, reported only a few days ago to the House of Commons upon its work, and submitted its conclusions. The Minister who has charge of this matter in the other Chamber brought in his Bill the day after the report was adopted by the House. He could not do so before. He simply took from the report the suggestions adopted by the Commons and embodied them in the Bill. This is peculiarly the work of the House of Commons, as represented by the Committee.

Hon. Sir JAMES LOUGHEED.

I took occasion to ascertain how many members of that Committee had interested themselves in its work, and I have been told, not from one source only, but from at least two, that, taking all of the sittings of the Committee throughout the Session, a good average attendance might be placed at ten.

Hon. Sir JAMES LOUGHEED: I heard it was less than that.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: Sometimes it was much less. This report was adopted in the House of Commons and the Bill was brought in.

These are the circumstances under which the Bill comes to us. I have already explained in similar terms, but perhaps more concisely, the history of the Bill. It came up for its second reading yesterday. Now, I believe that the Senate is disposed to approve of the most generous treatment that can be afforded for the returned men—

Hon. Sir JAMES LOUGHEED: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: —particularly the invalids and the men whose vitality has been lessened by the noble services that they rendered this country abroad, and the widows and orphans.

I believe that at the same time there is a duty devolving upon this Chamber to examine seriously into any cause for broadening the class of beneficiaries and the treatment to be accorded them under Bills coming from the other Chamber. We have before us the experience of the United States in dealing with pensions. Men of my time have had that situation before them in a very glaring way, and I believe it is the special duty of this Chamber, which is not under the influence of any outside organisation, be it small or large, to see that the men be fairly treated, but at the same time that the Treasury be fully protected.

We have extended the bonus for two years. The Ralston Royal Commission has suggested that it be extended for five years. The Bill makes it a permanent bonus absorbed in the pension. It goes without saying that the extension which we have made leaves the door open for an examination of the question of a further extension and a weighing of the policy of permanency. There must have been reasons given to the committee of the House of Commons to prompt them to make this a permanent charge upon the Treasury. Have those reasons been given to us? We cannot have them until the House meets again, under normal conditions, and when a Com-