

APPENDIX No. 3

COMMITTEE ROOM 318, HOUSE OF COMMONS,

WEDNESDAY, May 7, 1919.

The Special Committee appointed to consider the question of pensions and pensions regulations met at 8 p.m. the Chairman, the Hon. Mr. Rowell presiding.

Members present: Messieurs Andrews, Béland, Brien, Clark (N. Bruce), Cronyn, Green, Lang, McGibbon (Muskoka), Nesbitt, Nickle (Vice-chairman), Pardee, Redman, Ross, Rowell (Chairman), Savard, and Sutherland.

The CHAIRMAN: Mr. H. B. Willing, Secretary-treasurer of the Imperial Veterans in Canada who has come from Winnipeg to present the case for pensions on their behalf is present. Although the hearings for the taking of evidence have been closed the committee will re-open them especially to receive Mr. Willing's statement on behalf of the Imperial Veterans in Canada.

Mr. WILLING: Mr. Chairman, and gentlemen, I appreciate the fact that you have reopened the hearing of evidence very much indeed and in laying before you the case of the Imperial men I want it distinctly to be understood that it is not the Reservists alone that I am speaking for, but I am speaking on behalf of the members of the Royal Air Force and other branches of the service who, like myself, when the order was passed by the Militia Department that no married man should be accepted unless he had his wife's written consent went to England at our own expense and joined up over there because of our wives refusing to give their consent. That is the reason I appeal to you on behalf of myself and of the other boys who have been residents of Canada. Most of them are Canadian citizens and they have all done their bit in building up Canada and they feel that they are Canadian citizens and not British soldiers. The fact is that although their service as British soldiers was in France and elsewhere, to all intents and purposes they are Canadian citizens. When they joined the British service they were not asked to relinquish any of their claims as Canadians. Now with regard to the cases of the widows I want particularly to impress upon you that we have cases of widows all the way across Canada from one end to the other, who are receiving \$24 per month from the Imperial Government, and if their cases have not been brought to the attention of the Patriotic Fund that is all they have had to exist upon till their husbands returned from overseas. In the majority of cases their wants have been taken care of, but in the case of numbers of others they have not. There have been cases by the score of women who were too proud to go to the Patriotic Fund, and some who had the idea that because their husbands were in the British service they had no claim; that of course was because of ignorance. Now the boys have come back and they are finding out that their wives have been out scrubbing in order to earn a living. There is no case I have mentioned to-night but what I can prove. These boys have come back home and they are indignant and say that their wives should not have had to work in this manner but that they should have been able to take care of their children. It is impossible to have good Canadian citizens growing up if the mothers have to be out working instead of taking care of them. That applies also to widows who receive assistance at the present time but the Patriotic Fund will go out of business very shortly and what will be the situation then? In Manitoba we have a local Patriotic Fund which is a charge upon the ratepayers of Manitoba alone, but they look upon this as an obligation of the Dominion; they think that they should not be saddled with this obligation. As time goes on if you do not make provision for these widows they are going to be a burden upon the charity of the citizens of Manitoba and of the Dominion of Canada. Then take the case of the reservists; these men went from home here, they were ordered to go and they had to go, they had no recourse. The British Reservist comes back with

[Mr. H. B. Willing.]