

*Pension Act*

this House, do not appeal to me. The House of Commons' committee sat for a number of months upon this question. The report of the royal commission, upon which the amendments have been based, has been before parliament for at least two months. Any report which is laid on the Table of the House is available not only to members of this House, but also to members of the Senate, and if this argument which is being put forward were to be entertained, what about the Canteen Funds bill which was thrown out by the Senate after due consideration?

Mr. GRAHAM: That is what did not take place.

Mr. BELAND: Though I may not be in order in referring to this particular measure, I cannot for the life of me see any reason for rejecting the Canteen Funds bill. It is not our money; it is the soldiers' money, the distribution of which was recommended by the royal commission, and we passed the legislation unanimously in perfect accord with those recommendations. But that bill was thrown out by the Senate.

Coming to this particular measure amending the Pension Act, one must bear in mind that the act as it is to-day provides that the pension bonus will lapse automatically on the 1st of September next should not a measure extending it be passed at the present session. The bonus which was provided some years ago has been extended from time to time up until the 1st of September, 1924, after which it will not be paid unless new provision is made. I have endeavoured to secure information regarding the possibility of arriving at an agreement of some kind with the Senate upon some of the amendments at least, and the information I have been able to secure is to the effect that it would be useless. Should not the bill as amended by the Senate pass to-day, I repeat, very serious consequences will result, serious for the soldiers, inasmuch as all the pensioners, or at least an immense majority of them, will be deprived of the bonus, which I understand we here are unanimously in favour of extending permanently, for a number of years still, at all events. The bill provided for making the bonus permanent, making it a part of the pension itself. However, I wish to use every possible means that can be taken advantage of, and therefore, Mr. Speaker, I beg to move:

Resolved that a message be sent to the Senate respectfully requesting a free conference with their Honours to consider certain amendments made by the Senate to Bill No. 255, an act to amend the Pension Act, to which amendments this House has not agreed,

[Mr. Béland.]

and upon which the Senate insists, and any amendments which at such conference it may be considered desirable to make to said bill or amendments thereto.

We do not know what the result of the conference may be. I hope we may obtain something, but I say frankly that should the Senate persist again in their attitude the only course left open to us will be to accept the bill as amended in order to save the bonus.

Mr. J. A. CLARK (Burrard): I have no objection whatsoever to offer to a conference between the members of this House and the members of the Senate. I regret, however, that some committee was not appointed earlier. This situation was known last night, and I attempted to draw it to the attention of the government then with a view of arriving at immediate action. I have very grave doubts whether anything can be accomplished now in view of the shortness of the time, and in view particularly of the attitude of the leader of the government in the Senate. At the same time as far as I am personally concerned I welcome the conference idea as a last resource, and am prepared to use my utmost endeavours to secure some of the amendments which are desired to this act. I agree with the minister that we must not do anything to imperil the rights of the pensioners in regard to the bonus. That principle has been agreed to by both this House and the Senate. Therefore, I urge that we do nothing that might imperil that section of the act which even the Senate agrees should pass. So far as the minister's remarks on the Canteen bill are concerned, I really think it is unfortunate that the two bills should be coupled in our remarks. After all, the Pension bill is the essential bill. No one is being hurt because the Canteen bill has not been passed. The money will lie there, and although possible benefits will be postponed for a year I do not think any returned man, or anybody at least, could suffer because that bill was not passed. I think we must concentrate our efforts on the Pension bill—that is the bill. The failure to sanction the amendments to the act is the thing that is doing the harm in the country.

Mr. MEIGHEN: I am not quite clear—

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): If my right hon. friend will pardon me. I would like to say just one word in reply to a point mentioned by my hon. friend (Mr. Clark). He stated that he drew the attention of the government last night to the prospect that a conference could be arranged and, I think, rather left the im-