

unfounded. Following this, the Militia Department order that her cheques for the assigned pay and separation allowance be paid direct to her was cancelled, and it was determined once more that the payments should be made through the Patriotic Fund at Montreal. What I wish to represent to the Minister of Militia—and this unquestionably is the high court of the land where all grievances can be ventilated—is that Mrs. Zwingle's husband is at the front, and she complains that she has been ill-treated, persecuted and slandered.

She claims that her husband's assigned pay and her separation allowance are her absolute property, and that the department has no control over them. As regards the Patriotic Fund allowance, I quite agree that according to the Act passed in 1914, the Patriotic Fund has a discretion in the matter, although the discretion should be used wisely and fairly. But as regards the assigned pay and the separation allowance, I would like to have a statement from the Minister of Militia if the department can direct the payment to be made through the Patriotic Fund or through any other organization, or if she is not, as a matter of right, entitled to have those moneys paid to her direct. I have brought the matter before the House after a long correspondence exchanged between Mr. Tucker, K. C., the Patriotic Fund, the Department of Militia and Defence, and my right hon. friend the Prime Minister. It is a grievance, made perhaps more serious by the fact that this woman states positively that she has been persecuted, that she has been slandered, even after the allegations made against her were declared to be without foundation. I hope my hon. friend will look into this matter in the department and see that Mrs. Zwingle receives her assigned pay and her separation allowance without any further delay.

Major-General MEWBURN: This matter has not come before me personally in the Separation Allowance Branch, and I have no desire to shield or to make excuses for any mistakes that may have occurred. Since I have had the honour of taking charge of the Department of Militia and Defence, the Separation Allowance Branch has caused us more trouble and anxiety than probably any other branch in the department. This branch deals with some 300,000 accounts, and mistakes have been made. Since I took charge of the department, I have endeavoured to re-organize that branch and have tried to get it down

[Mr. Lemieux.]

to a proper business basis. I think I can say I am succeeding in that. I may go further and say that it will still be some months before it is running smoothly.

I will investigate this particular case thoroughly and find out why this woman has been treated in the way my hon. friend states, which statement I have no doubt is correct. I cannot understand why the money was paid over to the Patriotic Fund. There have been cases where money has been paid over to the Patriotic Fund on account of some arrangement between the Patriotic Fund and the beneficiary. The Patriotic Fund has a committee which has made many investigations throughout the various cities of Canada. There have been cases where people have been drawing separation allowances to which they were neither legally nor morally entitled, and we have had to call upon the Patriotic Fund to make investigations. The declaration of which my hon. friend has spoken is the legal declaration which every person claiming separation allowance has to swear before a commissioner or a notary public. It is simply to get the evidence in the department so that we can have the account straightened out. If any injustice or wrong has been done to any person by an official of my department, he will cease to be employed in my department. I will make it my duty to investigate the matter fully and, if any wrong has been done, to rectify it.

Mr. LEMIEUX: I am perfectly satisfied with the answer given by the minister. I am willing to let him have the dossier in my possession. It would then perhaps not be necessary for him to go through all the departments of the Government because many letters have been addressed to different departments.

Major-General MEWBURN: I shall be glad to have the papers.

Mr. LEMIEUX: I am satisfied that there has been no ill-will on the part of the department, and the declaration made by the minister that the assigned pay and separation allowance should go direct to the dependents is quite satisfactory. If that is done, there will be no more grievance.

Major-General MEWBURN: If she is the lawful wife of the soldier.

Mr. LEMIEUX: Certainly she is. There is an error in the name on the Order Paper. It is not Mrs. Antoina Zwingle, it is Mrs. Wineas Zwingle.

Motion agreed to.