

distress simply because the Disability Board of the Militia Department has no power to grant to them a portion of the separation allowance, but must grant all the separation allowance or none. That is to say if the person who was the means of support cannot be described as totally ineffective, the partial disability cannot be considered at all in giving these people the privilege of separation allowance. That is clearly a very serious matter. It is absolutely an evil, and it certainly has brought about, in many cases to my own knowledge, the greatest possible hardship. I do not think the Government itself will admit that there is any excuse whatever for such a state of affairs. It is doubtless a case which has been overlooked, and the sooner the injustice to these people is remedied, the better it will be not only for them but for ourselves.

Major-General MEWBURN: My hon. friend from Peterborough has raised a very large question that will require a great deal of careful and mature consideration. The separation allowance that is given to dependents of the soldiers enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force is granted under clear and definite terms. It is given to the wives of officers, non-commissioned officers and men belonging to the Canadian Expeditionary Force, and some time ago was extended to widowed mothers whose sons were their sole and only support. Doubtless there are many cases of hardship existing throughout the country of mothers, and in many cases I might say, sisters who were not dependent on the men when they went to the front, but in regard to whom circumstances have since arisen which cause these unfortunate women to think they should receive the separation allowance to which they are not legally entitled under the provisions of the Act. If you open up and go into the question of apportioning the separation allowance according to the need or suffering of the particular individual, it means raising a problem requiring an enormous staff to deal with and throwing an immense additional responsibility on the department in the investigation of every similar case. The instance to which my hon. friend has referred no doubt has been met, or if not it should be met, by the magnificent efforts and work of the Canadian Patriotic Fund. The officers of that fund are working in the very closest co-operation with the Separation Allowance Branch, by whom all cases are investigated. Where no provision exists for the payment of separation allowance to the dependent of a soldier over-

[Mr. Burnham.]

seas, and when circumstances warrant, the Patriotic Fund intervenes and takes care of the needy and distressed. If it is the pleasure of the House that the Separation Allowance should be extended to such dependents, such action, as I have already said, will demand very careful and mature consideration. Not only will it necessitate an enormously increased staff but it will mean practically duplicating the work of the Patriotic Fund. The Disability Board investigates, checks, and reports on all these cases; and I think if my hon. friend will withdraw his motion until such time as it shall have received more careful consideration by the department and the Government, the need will be met much more quickly than by having a prolonged discussion in the House.

Mr. NICKLE: It does not seem to me that this matter can be set aside as easily, or that it is as simple as the minister thinks. Prior to the inauguration of the Military Service Act, when only those were bound to serve who were willing to do so, it was easy for the man who felt that it was incumbent upon him to maintain his parents to remain at home and look after the charge that he had so many years performed. The hon. member for Peterborough in proposing this Resolution did not perhaps go as fully into the facts as he might have done, and therefore it may not be amiss that I should take a minute or two in explaining the principles upon which the separation allowance was granted.

Hon. Mr. MURPHY: Hear, hear.

Mr. NICKLE: The separation allowance falls into two classes: It is the amount that is granted to those who are legally dependent upon the man; and it is also granted to those who, although not legally dependent have moral claim upon the man who has gone, or who is to go, to the front. In the case of the wife who is legally dependent upon the man no question arises as to her financial status or position in society. She may have an income of \$20,000, or may be in receipt of only \$5 a week, but separation allowance goes to her as a right. If a wife has a legal claim she gets, according to the rank of the man, such money as the Government has seen fit to apportion to the various ranks. For instance, the wife of a private gets \$25 a month, whereas the colonel's wife draws \$60 a month. That will give you some idea of the spread, or the scope, that exists between the private and the colonel.

Take, however, the case of a man who has gone or who has to go, who does not go