

In regard to actual numbers, new awards to disability pensioners have been slightly greater than the numbers of deaths and discontinuations. As at December 31 last there was a total of 79,881 disability pensions and 18,122 dependent pensions, a total of 98,003, involving an annual liability of \$40,589,757.

Mr. GREEN: Is it expected there will be a decrease each year?

Mr. POWER: I cannot say; I do not know. It is likely, but probably not so substantial.

Mr. GREEN: In view of the different points which have been raised throughout the discussion of the item, would it be possible to have amendments made to the Pension Act at this session?

Mr. POWER: I do not think the hon. member would expect me to tell him about any legislation at this time. For the moment I am considering whether I shall bring in legislation dealing with the Pension Act. So far no decision has been reached. That is the best answer I can give.

Mr. MacNEIL: I do not wish to weary the minister and members of the committee; but as the minister has said, this is our one opportunity of advancing suggestions with respect to amendments to the act. I would suggest that if the minister is considering amendments he might consider the deletion of section 77. This section reads:

Notwithstanding anything contained in this or any other act, no pension, or additional pension, awardable or payable under the provisions of this act, shall be awarded or paid,

(a) under schedule A or schedule B of this act, to or in respect of any child of a member of the forces or pensioner, if such child shall have been born on or after the first day of May, 1933;

(b) under schedule A of this act, to or in respect of the wife of a member of the forces or pensioner, if she shall have been married to him on or after the date aforementioned—

And so on. I think all hon. members clearly understand that this section was introduced as a measure of economy and at a time when national revenues were at a low ebb. According to statements by the government, that condition no longer persists. They say we are well on the way to economic recovery, and I think we may well do as has been done in Australia, namely, restore benefits formerly taken away because of economic pressure.

Under subsection (a) of this section a very curious situation arises. Two of the children of a pensioner may be receiving a pension,

[Mr. Power.]

but two of them born subsequent to May, 1933, may not receive a pension. This is a difficult situation to explain. Furthermore, with regard to wives who marry subsequently—say in 1932—it is becoming extremely difficult to explain to them why, even if a husband dies from disability held to be attributable to war service, a pension is not awarded. Many rather unfair anomalies exist, and I would ask the minister to take the matter into consideration when he has in mind amendments to the Pension Act, or if he decides to bring the act under review this session.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Carried?

Mr. MacNEIL: As the item is not carried, there are a number of other suggestions. The item is not carried, is it? I have other suggestions to make.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The debate on it is closed, if it is carried.

Mr. POWER: I have no objection to permitting it to stand. We shall have to have another two hour sitting at some other time, with respect to the same item. If the item were passed, I should be very grateful to the hon. member; but if he does not wish it to pass, there is nothing I can say.

The CHAIRMAN: I asked if it carried, and no one said anything. I assumed that it had.

Mr. MacNEIL: Two members were on their feet.

Mr. GREEN: Would the minister permit discussion of one or two points on another vote? If he would do that, we could pass it this evening.

Mr. POWER: I should be very glad to do that. I endeavoured the first night to limit discussion to the single item. Since then the freest discussion has been carried on, but I confess I was not very successful in my attempts to control the committee. It can run as wild as it likes now.

Mr. GREEN: We would like to help the minister, if he would agree to the discussion of pensions on another item.

Mr. POWER: There will be an item under the administration of the whole department, and there will be nothing to prevent an hon. member from making any suggestion he wishes at that time.

Item agreed to.

Progress reported.

At six o'clock the house took recess.