

Hon. Sir JAMES LOUGHEED: They would not get it.

Hon. Mr. FOWLER: I think that would be wrong. Why should the dependents suffer?

Hon. Sir JAMES LOUGHEED: I think it is but reasonable to exclude those who through obvious misconduct placed their family in that position. Surely the Government of Canada is not pensioning those who through misconduct of this kind since the Pension Act came into force will die?

Hon. Mr. FOWLER: No, but my honourable friend speaks of misconduct. The conduct of those men, so far as their military duty was concerned, might have been above reproach. They might have been as brave as Marshal Ney for us, and yet contract venereal disease. It means that, in addition to being good soldiers, in addition to being brave fighters, they must be pure.

Hon. Sir JAMES LOUGHEED: No; if they died through that particular cause that is a different thing.

Hon. Mr. FOWLER: Died from that particular cause? Well, they may contract it easily enough. Of course, it is very wrong; but we have to meet human nature as it is, and to realize the frailties of the flesh, and men without knowing, without expecting that they are going to reap such a fruit, do indulge in pastimes which sometimes carry in their train just such diseases as this. Surely their dependents ought not to suffer. When a man has made a good record in the war, it does not follow that he has not been a good servant of the public because he has met with misfortune by reason of contracting venereal disease when away fighting.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: I have considerable sympathy with my honourable friend, and I do not like to add to his troubles. I know he is wrestling with facts that are intricate, and we should have consideration for him. The only point I want to make clear is that of two soldiers who have been stricken at the same moment with the same disease, on the same day, one will leave a pension to his children if he is lucky enough to die before a certain date, while the other one, if he lingers over that mark, will leave his relatives nothing. I understand that to be the situation.

Hon. Mr. DANIEL: If this Act refers to those who contracted this disease since the war has ended, I have nothing to say;

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but I understand that it refers to those who contracted disease when they were overseas and under unusual circumstances. I have no doubt that men contracted that disease who, if they had been at home attending to their business in the ordinary way, would not have contracted it at all, or have taken any line of action which would give them an opportunity of doing so. But, taking into consideration the fact that those men were all living under unusual and strange circumstances, if they were unfortunate enough to contract disease, and so unfortunate that that disease really took their lives, I do not think it is right or fair under any principle that their dependents should be deprived of any pension or anything of that kind which otherwise they would have been entitled to. That would be punishing the friends for an accident to the soldier, because there is no doubt that as between those who took venereal disease and those who did not, it was a mere toss-up—merely accidental. We can readily understand that very many of the men made themselves liable to that disease who were fortunate enough not to get it.

Hon. Sir JAMES LOUGHEED: I might point out that this distinction must be drawn: if a man died before discharge he got his pension, but this relates to men who were discharged long ago and who may have died since.

Hon. Mr. FOWLER: But they contracted it during the war.

Hon. Sir JAMES LOUGHEED: Well, we cannot tell that; that is one of the difficulties.

Hon. Mr. FOWLER: If they contracted it afterwards, I have nothing to say.

Hon. Sir JAMES LOUGHEED: The difficulty is to determine that. However, there it is.

Hon. Mr. FOWLER: Their medical history would show that.

Hon. Sir JAMES LOUGHEED: The Commons Committee on Re-establishment have gone lengthily into this matter; they have made very close inquiry, and this is the recommendation of that Committee, reported to the Commons, and it is the view taken by that Committee after sitting nearly the whole Session on the subject.

Hon. Mr. FOWLER: I would not care if that Committee sat for six months, it would not be infallible.