

what the financial implications would be if the numerous proposals as to amelioration were put into effect by Parliament. I think I may say at once that if the Royal Commission had concerned itself in what the cost to the country would be of carrying out the various schemes and proposals which were laid before them, and which the Royal Commission discussed with the persons who put those schemes before them, we should have a very much more valuable report before us, and a better understanding of the whole matter so far as the public and press are concerned.

I desire to offer a few observations with respect to the Board of Pension Commissioners, and the officials of the Government generally, in addition to what my honourable friend the Chairman of the Committee has just said. I agree with what he has said with regard to those people. The complaint has been made throughout this whole country, and so far as I am aware it has not been controverted, that the Board of Pension Commissioners, in the administration of pension law, were lacking in sympathy. Well, I desire to say far myself at once that I do not ask this Board to interpret the law sympathetically, or sentimentally, or in any other way than according to the well-known principles of interpretation of law. If we are to permit or expect that any body of men charged with the administration of the law will allow sympathy or sentiment to interfere with the interpretation of the law, then a great and incalculable injury will be done not only to ex-service men but to the country as a whole. Therefore I say, if those men interpret the law according to the well-known principles of legal interpretation we shall have an opportunity of knowing whether the law is right or not. If it is not, we can change it.

In my opinion, the Board has been unjustly and unfairly attacked on that count, and on a number of other counts. The Board is silent, necessarily; it cannot defend itself. In agreement with the honourable Chairman, I have found throughout this discussion, and previous to the discussion, as one having to do with hundreds of cases of pension claims, that the members of this Board and the other members of the Department of Soldiers Civil Re-establishment who came before us, and with whom I had dealings previously, are capable, honest, industrious, efficient, and deserve well of this country, and the country is well served by them. On the whole, I do not believe it would be possible to get men who are more able and more conscientious to discharge this difficult

task, than the men who came before us, the officials of this Board.

In that respect I am not alone. The Ralston Commission itself, on page 129, says this:

On the other hand, the heavy responsibilities of the Pension Board have already been referred to. It is obvious that it has nothing to gain by refusing pensions. It could have courted popularity and lightened its work by taking a less determined and zealous attitude, and following the line of least resistance; but that the action taken was bona fide, and in the course of what is considered to be its duty, the Commission is satisfied.

Again I say, Canada is fortunate in having men of this type in the administration of a most intricate law, involving vast sums of money, and dealing in considerations which touch the heart and the conscience and the mind of the people of this country very deeply indeed.

With respect to these three Bills, these facts were disclosed. In the first place, we learned that these Bills had been prepared by the Government without reference to some of their responsible officials, and with very brief and cursory reference to other officials. These Bills were not considered by any Committee of the House of Commons. No member of that House during the discussion made any serious inquiry as to what these Bills would cost the country if put into effect; and no member of the Government volunteered any information to the House of Commons as to what the financial implications of those Bills were.

Bill 205 received in the House of Commons, in one sitting, its second reading, its commitment to the Committee of the Whole House, and its third reading.

These Bills reached the Senate in the closing days of the Session under these circumstances, and I venture to say that when these facts are known the action taken by this House in appointing a Committee to go as fully as possible into the circumstances will be fully concurred in by the general public.

The inquiry has disclosed that these Bills are badly drawn and ill-considered; that it is difficult to know that the results will be so far as ex-service men are concerned, and what the financial effects will be on the country. We find in two of the Bills that an expensive and cumbersome machinery is built up, the result of which is that it will cost one dollar to pay three dollars to the ex-service men of this country. In other words, 25 per cent of the total expenditure contemplated by the House of Commons is deflected from the ex-service men into a costly and cumbersome bureaucracy; and the extent to which the report of the Committee deals with this has my entire approval.