

*Militia Pension Act*

Mr. COCKERAM: Well, it has been made, and we are discussing it now.

Mr. FULTON: I think the point made by the hon. member for Vancouver North deserves more consideration than so far the minister has seen fit to give it. One realizes that it was made as an amendment, and also one realizes that the minister is anxious to have his bill go forward a step tonight and that, therefore, he is not inclined to accede to a suggestion that he reconsider the matter. But I feel that the suggestion made is worthy of such consideration, and if the minister is not prepared to move an appropriate amendment himself, then I suggest that he resubmit the matter to his advisers, to see whether they do not feel that the suggestion made by the hon. member for Vancouver North should be incorporated in the bill. One might point out that it would not impose a very great burden on the treasury, because these personnel are still required to make contributions at the time they make their election. So I think that technical point is not very important, as the minister may find out if he reconsiders it; and I see no good reason why it should not be adopted.

Mr. CLAXTON: I can assure the committee and the hon. member who has spoken that everything will be considered and reconsidered, that this process is going on continually. But with regard to this matter I am informed that it was thoroughly considered by an inter-departmental committee last year. It was considered by the government and was put forward to the house after all that consideration, and we are not prepared to make any further change at the present time. It is considered to be a fair proposal and, as I say, it should be read together with all of part V, which constitutes a whole that has been worked out to give a fair pension provision for the members of our active forces.

Mr. LENNARD: Could the minister give us the names of the personnel of this inter-departmental committee who set themselves up as authorities as to whether or not this act is streamlined for 1947? The minister says it was passed last year, but a good many bills were passed last year in which we can find loopholes now. I suggest that it should be given further consideration.

Mr. MERRITT: The minister has given two reasons for making no change in this provision. The first is that it has been there since 1910; the second is that this particular restriction has been carefully considered. I do not suppose the fact that it has been there since 1910 appeals to any member of the

[Mr. Claxton.]

committee, or even to the minister, but he has not given the committee the grounds for the decision to maintain the restrictive clause, though several times he has said that very point was considered. Would he now give the committee the particular grounds upon which it was decided to retain the restrictive clause in this section?

Mr. CLAXTON: Like other hon. members, I served in the non-permanent active militia on two separate occasions, once before serving in the first war and once after, and I appreciate very well the extent and value of their services. They are a fundamental, essential part of the work of our armed forces in Canada. But I think anyone who suggests that from the point of view of money value for pension purposes a year in the non-permanent active militia should be considered as equivalent to half a year in the full-time permanent force—

Mr. MERRITT: Or at R.M.C.

Mr. CLAXTON: —is not taking full account of the actual facts as they are. I am sure that was the reason the change was made; but, as I say, it was made at a time when the provisions generally were made more liberal, and at that time everything was taken into consideration to work out in part V a fair and generous pension plan.

Mr. MERRITT: That is not at all an answer to my question. My question is why the restrictive parts of the section were left in; why the service, in the case of someone in the army, must have been in the non-permanent militia and in the case of someone in the air force, in the auxiliary air force, and why that non-permanent service could not have been in either of the forces. I wanted the particular reasons why that decision was arrived at.

Mr. CLAXTON: It was felt that if you were to get any benefit in respect of pension from your service in the permanent force for the period spent in the non-permanent force, it should be in respect of service which was of direct value to your service in the permanent force. It is for service; it is not for periods of time spent in some work not directly contributory to the work you do in the permanent force.

Mr. SINCLAIR (Vancouver North): I should like to point out to the minister that before the war there were in the auxiliary air force, for example, men serving as transport drivers and getting exactly the same training they would have been given in the army, serving as transport drivers. As a veteran I think