

I would point out that it was Mr. Ferland, an officer of the Department of Veterans Affairs, who called all these meetings. He called only the boys who had consulted him at D.V.A., and a second official of D.V.A., Mr. Levesque, presided at all these meetings. Mr. Ferland assured them he would go with them as an official of the department to negotiate with these taxi companies, that he would come to Ottawa. He did go to the companies; he did come to Ottawa; he did get priorities and all the other things he had mentioned. He told them to come to his office and pay the moneys and the veterans went to his office and paid the moneys there. I do not think there can be any doubt that Mr. Ferland, during the time he was connected with D.V.A., led the veterans to believe that he was acting as an official of D.V.A., and that D.V.A. was behind them in looking after their interests, because I would point out that when it was time for the boys to return home there were certain officials in the army who had been given special training in regard to reestablishment and rehabilitation of our veterans, and these trained men travelled on the boats that were bringing the troops home. It was a part of their duties to explain to the returning veterans what Canada was going to do for them, to explain the matter of gratuities, reestablishment credits, educational benefits, V.L.A., and everything of that kind.

One of the things impressed on all these returning veterans was that when they returned home they should take no action without consulting D.V.A. They were especially warned of all the various rackets that would be developed and that an attempt would be made to put these rackets over them. I would refer to a small blue book entitled "Back to Civil Life." Probably every member has read it. This is the third edition, October 15, 1945, issued under the authority of the Right Hon. Ian A. Mackenzie. It is a creditable book, because it sets out in a clear and concise way all the information which the veteran would be looking for. It tells him how to take advantage of all the benefits Canada is providing for him. I would read two paragraphs at page 25:

80. Evidence has already come to light indicating that a few unscrupulous persons are prepared, by various means, to cheat veterans of their benefits under the War Service Grants Act. Veterans are therefore advised to consult the Department of Veterans Affairs before making any commitments involving the use of their reestablishment credits. Heavy penalties are imposed both on veterans and those who assist them in unauthorized use of the reestablishment credit.

[Mr. G. S. White.]

81. The Department of Veterans Affairs is most anxious that any evidence indicating fraud be brought to the attention of its nearest office at once so that appropriate steps may be taken to eliminate the danger of veterans' reestablishment being impeded through the expenditure of their benefits under this act in other than their best interests.

It seems to me that these veterans were simply following out the sound advice that had been given them. It was emphasized that they should consult D.V.A. and that is exactly what they did. These boys, who consulted an official of the department in Montreal, instead of receiving the help and guidance to which they were entitled, received the very opposite. I would remind the house that under the War Service Grants Act of 1944, under sections 21, 22 and 23, provision is made for certain penalties to be imposed in connection with this very section that I have read from the little bluebook.

It may be all very well, Mr. Speaker, for those of us in the house who are lawyers to pick all sorts of flaws and draw many conclusions as to why this large number of veterans acted in this manner, why it was so easy for them to be defrauded and have this nefarious scheme put over on them. But I would say that in all fairness we must remember that when many of these boys enlisted they were very young. Many of them were just out of school. The experience of those who had jobs was somewhat limited. When these boys have followed the advice which was given to them, namely, to consult the Department of Veterans Affairs, and when they now find that they have been defrauded out of certain benefits which Canada has been providing for them, it is hardly fair now to put the blame on them.

To date, as far as I can find out, the Department of Veterans Affairs has taken no action in this matter. What the report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police contains naturally I do not know, but the minister has access to that. I would submit that it is the responsibility of the Department of Veterans Affairs to rescue these veterans from the almost impossible position in which they find themselves today. It is also the responsibility of all members of this house, whether they are veteran members or not, to protest against this shameful and disgraceful conduct of an official of the Department of Veterans Affairs. I submit that if nothing is done we shall find that many of these veterans—and many of them are still very young—who gave splendid service overseas will lose the financial benefits of their gratuities and reestablish-