

friend (Mr. Power) on behalf of the widowed mothers of our fallen soldiers. I have already expressed myself on this question before, and I had hoped the committee would bring in recommendations accordingly. I hope the minister will strike out subparagraph (5).

Mr. CRONYN: I find myself in a somewhat peculiar position because on former occasions in this House I have advocated a change in the law respecting widowed mothers. The law as it existed up to to-day did to my mind, discriminate against this particular class of pensioner. The question was very fully discussed and considered by the committee, and the hon. member (Mr. Power) put forward his arguments in his usual forcible way, but in the end the committee decided that the provisions which appear in this Bill went as far as they felt they should go. We must remember that there is a very great difference drawn in the pension law between the case of a widow and a parent. A widow gets a pension absolutely regardless of any means she may have. Her position in life has nothing to do with what she may receive. The law takes it that she is entitled, first, to the support of her husband when he was alive, and that by reason of his death she should not have any deduction in her income. But in the case of parents there is the distinction made that the parent first of all must be shown to have been dependent on the soldier. True it is that by a subsequent clause the cases of prospective dependency are provided for, but leaving that aside for the moment, the first provision of the law is that the parent must be shown to have been dependent on the soldier. Next, it must be shown that the parent is in need, is not independent. If the parent be independent no pension is due, but if the parent be dependent the pension is payable. Under the law as it stands, it was necessary in order to award pensions to ascertain whether the parent was or was not dependent and, as has been stated, various accretions to income or the possession of a home, for instance, were treated as independent income and the amount was deducted from the pension. Under this Bill no deduction is made from a widowed mother's pension by reason of the fact that she owns a home, or on account of her earnings, and provided she resides in Canada that her income from other sources does not exceed \$20 a month. That was the decision of the committee. It goes far

to ameliorate the situation that exists at the present time, and I think should be accepted.

Mr. SINCLAIR (Antigonish and Guysborough): I am inclined to favour the views of my hon. friend (Mr. Power). I do not think the pension of the widowed mother should be in as precarious a state as it appears to be. Many cases have occurred in my own experience where the inspector was, I considered, somewhat too harsh in his report. Of course, a great deal depends on the administration of the Act as well as the phraseology of it, but there are cases, I have no doubt, where the report of the inspector upon a visit has been too severe. I know of widowed mothers and fathers having been deprived of their small pension because the inspector took into consideration circumstances which really should have been ignored. I have had occasion to bring one or two cases of this kind to the attention of the commission, and when the facts were explained the pension was restored. The question is largely one of administration, and I think that a meddling inspector who wants to make himself important and show that he is doing his duty thoroughly may sometimes go to extremes. I knew of one instance in which an inspector visited a country house where two old people were living. The old man was almost blind. This couple had lost their two sons at the war, and the old lady was endeavouring with her husband to make a living as best she could. They had a small farm in a very isolated and poor district, away from neighbours. The inspector discovered that they had a few hens in the barn, a cow, and a dozen or so of apple trees, and these assets he calculated to represent a certain amount of support to these old people. He reported accordingly, and the pension, which was only a small one, he recommended to be reduced because they had this farm. In reality, what they possessed was merely a shelter over their heads. These people could not raise anything on the farm at all for the obvious reason that they had no labour; and to hire labour in that part of the country and make anything out of that meagre property was an impossibility. So that the inspector ought to have ignored the circumstances and let this case alone. When the matter was brought to the notice of the board they rectified it. I am inclined to agree with my hon. friend from Quebec that some change ought to be made in the regulations.