

surely it is here. The amendment is a very simple one, for no legislation of the nature proposed in that amendment could be so conveniently dealt with as in this bill. That is obvious to anyone who will consider the matter. Oh, it is said, the amendment in so far as it relates to the returned soldiers is a wholly federal matter. We do not object to that of course, but it is not altogether a federal matter. These men are and have been a charge upon the municipalities, and if the amendment proposed by my hon. friend from Fort William is adopted it will give a certain relief to those who have been helping to take care of the returned soldiers. The municipalities would be only too glad to welcome the amendment. These men gave five years of their lives to their country in time that actually elapsed, while they have sacrificed much more in the physical disability they have suffered and which, because they cannot demonstrate it, prejudices them with the pensions board. Those upon whom the right of old age has come five years earlier by reason of war service should be recognized in this section. The amendment, literally, will not take up more than a line and a half, and this is the proper place to deal with the subject it covers. The House has said to-night that it wants to do the right thing by returned men of the class described, and we have heard from the government that it desires to take care of such men. Now the opportunity offers and the government declines.

Miss MACPHAIL: Will the government promise the committee to-night that returned soldiers who are not covered by existing pensions legislation, and who are not able to earn their living because of a breakdown in health due to the war, will be taken care of by amendments to the pensions act to be introduced at an early day? Will the government give us that assurance if we let this bill go through as it stands? Now that the government is going to ask for an increased vote for national defence it seems to me that we should take care of the results of the last war before we prepare ourselves for the next. For my part I should be willing to see Canada incur any debt within reason to make happy and contented those men who suffered so much in the last war. What has been said in all parts of the House to-night is quite true. Every one of us is receiving many requests from neighbours and friends of men who cannot earn their living because of injuries received in the war and who are not covered by existing pensions provisions. Will the government make a statement giving us some assurance in this regard?

[Mr. Ryckman.]

Mr. KING (Kootenay): This discussion is interesting and helpful and if it would meet the situation to fix the age limit at sixty-five I personally would not object. But I know that it will not have this effect, because there are many returned soldiers who become prematurely old at fifty, fifty-five, sixty and sixty-five. The problem raised by the hon. member for Fort William we shall be called upon to consider in a different manner from the way he proposes to deal with it. Since the war—this is true also of the actual war period—there has been a distinct understanding in this House between the opposing parties that soldier legislation would not be considered from the standpoint of politics. It has always been understood that there would be no politics in any provisions made for the soldiers. From time to time cases have come up before parliament for consideration of the interests of the returned men, and these matters have always been referred to parliamentary committees, who have ever been ready to hear the representations of the soldiers through their organizations. I do submit that it would be better for us to leave the question proposed in this amendment to be dealt with in that way rather than allow it to become a political issue. Do not let us have it said that the government or the opposition did not do this or that.

Mr. MANION: If the minister will agree to deal with the matter this year I will withdraw the amendment.

Mr. KING (Kootenay): I will agree to this: The government will follow the practice, which has heretofore obtained and which I believe is the wisest one, of referring to a parliamentary committee such amendments to the soldier legislation now on the statute books as may be deemed advisable and such as will provide, if possible, more generous and more equitable treatment for the returned men who have served overseas. These matters can be best dealt with by such a committee, where they can be thoroughly discussed without political bias and with a view to obtaining the best judgment which careful consideration can suggest. It would be harmful, in my opinion, to adopt this amendment. As I have said, it will not meet the situation; it will merely serve as a barrier against many of these men who will be prematurely old at fifty-five and sixty. There is no question about that.

Mr. MANION: What sort of barrier?

Mr. KING (Kootenay): My hon. friend proposes in this amendment to deal with a