

Supply—Veterans Affairs

treatment for lung trouble and then, unfortunately, finds that he is affected by heart trouble; in such circumstances is he or is he not entitled to hospital treatment at, let us say, Shaughnessy hospital for that heart trouble, or only for his pensionable disability in respect of his lungs?

Mr. Gregg: Only for his pensionable disability.

Mr. Cruickshank: Then I should like to take issue with that. A case was brought to my attention which, I am pleased to say, was arranged satisfactorily. The person in question had been blinded at Ypres while serving in the first world war with the Princess Pats. Unfortunately about a month or two ago, owing to his blindness he walked into a woodpile and suffered injury to his elbow. This man was refused treatment in the hospital at Victoria because, it was stated, his elbow injury was not due to his war disability.

I must admit that this matter was straightened out satisfactorily. Surely if a man who was blinded because of his service either in the first or in the second world war meets with further difficulty, his blindness should constitute a disability. It is my view that if a man is disabled in any way owing to service in either of the great wars, whether he suffers from heart, lung or any other ailment, he should be entitled to hospital treatment. We in British Columbia have known of too many cases of brigadiers, generals and even major generals suffering from rheumatism, bad knees or something like that, but who have been able to secure treatment at Shaughnessy when the private soldier could not get treatment because, according to the regulations, he was not entitled to it.

In my view every veteran of either the first or second world war should be entitled to free hospitalization, without declaring himself a pauper. I certainly must object when a blinded man is barred from securing hospitalization for an ailment resulting from his blindness. I admit that, in the case I referred to at first, fair treatment was given; I wish to be fair about that, but I do urge that every consideration should be given by the department to any veteran of either war in the matter of hospitalization.

Mr. Gregg: "Eligibility due to service" might be either direct or indirect. The example of "indirect" would be the blind man injuring himself by walking into the woodpile. I think it will turn out that his injury was an indirect result of his service.

The other point I should like to make is that neither at Shaughnessy hospital nor at

[Mr. Cruickshank.]

any other D.V.A. hospital across Canada is the ex-major general given any preferred treatment over the ex-private.

Mr. White (Hastings-Peterborough): A minute ago the minister said he was quite satisfied there were enough pensions advocates, and then he referred to the long time it took to prepare a case. Could he tell the committee the approximate number of appeals from Ontario in one year, and the number of pensions advocates to handle those appeals.

Mr. Gregg: Perhaps that might be discussed under item 537.

Mr. Herridge: The minister referred to pensions advocates. I understand that at the moment pensions advocates in British Columbia are located at Victoria and Vancouver. These two cities get all the preference in British Columbia in anything of importance. They have the ministers, and officials go to Vancouver or Victoria, and rarely come to the interior. Some years ago we had a veterans advocate located in the Kootenays, serving what would be considered the ridings of Yale, East Kootenay, West Kootenay, Kamloops and the north country. At the present time, with the advocates having to come from the coast periodically to serve this large area, I am sure that under present arrangements there is some unnecessary delay in interviewing men and taking up their cases. I would ask the minister and his officials to give consideration to locating at least one veterans advocate in the southern interior of British Columbia.

Mr. Gregg: We have included in the estimates an advance for such personnel as may be requested by the chief advocate. I shall discuss with him the points made tonight and if there is a necessity for more advocates the matter will be taken under careful consideration.

Item agreed to.

535. War veterans allowance board, administration, \$203,960.

Mr. Wright: I notice there is a decrease of about \$50,000 in this item. The details at page 320 would indicate that this decrease is due to a decrease in travelling expenses. This year there is a sum of \$3,000 for travelling expenses as compared with \$58,000 last year. Would the minister explain this difference? It seems to me that the board either does not intend to travel, or does not intend to do much inspection this year, as compared with last year. Under the amendment to the act regional boards are being set up, but I would expect those regional boards would cost some money to operate.