

I would suggest for the consideration of the Postmaster General if the remedy which he himself has suggested is not to be deemed the best one, namely, that he consider the advisability of offering a general percentage of increase based upon the changed conditions. In that respect there would be, at all events, an appearance of equality, and the Postmaster General would be saved a great deal of trouble. The suggestion that the contracts be cancelled is perhaps for the moment the best thing that can be done, but if it is to be dealt with in the manner of a revision, I would suggest for his consideration whether it would not be better to offer a fixed percentage of increase, applying to contracts that have been taken within a given date, such percentage of increase to correspond in a measurable degree with the increased cost of material and supplies.

Sir ROBERT BORDEN: Mr. Speaker, I entirely agree that there are great objections to the course proposed that such matters should be left within the discretion of the Postmaster General, or within the discretion of the Government. I appreciate the suggestion which has been made by the hon. member for Shelburne and Queens (Mr. Fielding). At the same time the Government naturally must take into consideration the position in which it would be placed by even that suggestion, because probably it might be called upon not to stop there but to apply some percentage of increase to every contract that has been entered into by the Government. Perhaps, now that the discussion has taken place, the hon. member who made the motion will be content to withdraw it in order that the subject may be considered by the Government. The discussion could be renewed in some other way at a later date if thought desirable. I should like to add, of course, that all of us have the greatest possible sympathy with those who have undertaken these contracts at a cost which involves loss to them. None of us would desire that. But on the other hand there are considerations touching the public interest which, as hon. members on both sides would agree, the Government ought to take strictly into account before any definite action is embarked upon.

Mr. BURNHAM: In view of what the Prime Minister has promised, Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to withdraw my motion.

SEPARATION ALLOWANCES FOR SOLDIERS' DEPENDENTS.

Mr. J. H. BURNHAM (West Peterborough) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, it should not be necessary for soldiers' dependents to show total disability in order to obtain aid or other forms of support from the Separation Allowance Branch, but that such aid should be apportioned according to support possible.

He said: The point at issue is simply this: Where the dependent of a soldier applies for separation allowance, that dependent must show that this soldier was her sole means of support, or, if there is a male relative at home, such as a husband or brother, that he is totally incapacitated and absolutely unable to furnish any portion of the means of support of the person applying for the grant or allowance. If such person was only affected to the extent of 5 per cent, then the soldier would not be the only or sole means of support. The consequence is that the support is in many cases of such a meagre character that it is an imposition and unfairness to the soldier and his family, and not really intended—cannot be intended—by the people of this country or the members of this House as a justification for refusing some degree of assistance, if not the full measure of allowance. I will read you a certificate by Dr. Carmichael, of Peterborough, a very well-known physician, with reference to the case of Mrs. Hamlin. It illustrates the point we are discussing so extremely well that I may be pardoned for bringing it to the attention of the House:

In reference to the case of Mrs. Marilla Hamlin, 254 Murroe Ave., Peterborough, Ont., who is receiving Separation Allowance on account of her son, 204157 Pte. W. Hamlin, 3rd Division Ammunition Company, and is now cut off because her husband is not totally incapacitated, she has three sons at front, and three more children at home, not able to earn for themselves, going to school. She always depended on her sons to help keep home and children, as the father was not able to work steady. It will take all he can earn to board and clothe himself, let alone keep his wife and family at home, and it will likely have them suffering before another winter is over when everything is going up in price. The husband has a chronic bronchitis, some might say T. B. from his appearance and cough if he gets any cold. And her three boys doing their bit for country she should not be in want or suffering when her boys, if home, would keep her comfortable.

Yours truly,

D. M. Carmichael, M.D.

Now it is to be presumed in some cases, at any rate, if not in this, that the sons have since become married, and that their mother and younger brothers and sisters at home have positively no means of support except a portion of the assigned pay. The dependents have no separation allowance, and they are naturally stranded and in great