

18. The Committee appreciates the difficulties of assuring an equitable distribution of the fund. At the same time it is aware of the special problems of veterans who were prisoners of war. It suggests that, in view of the obvious impossibility of settling all claims, the problem might be partially resolved by using a portion of the remaining balance to set up a Prisoner of War Benevolent Fund to meet the human needs of prisoners of war and their dependants. This special fund could be administered after the fashion of similar benevolent funds already operating on behalf of veterans and their dependants.

#### *Corps of Canadian Fire Fighters*

19. Representatives of the Corps of Canadian (Overseas) Fire Fighters appeared before a Committee for the first time since 1948. Its submission was similar to the one made on the former occasion.

20. The main request of the Fire Fighters is to be given the full status of veterans. This request had been turned down in the past on the grounds that the corps was formed under the War Measures Act as a civilian corps and administered by the Minister of National War Services rather than the Department and Minister of National Defence. Earlier Veterans Affairs Committees recommended an extension of veterans' benefits to the Fire Fighters (complete coverage in 1946 and partial in 1948). These recommendations were not accepted entirely by the government because of the non-military status of the corps.

21. The corps rendered outstanding fire fighting and civil defence service in the United Kingdom from 1942 until late in 1944. Because of the nature of their service, many benefits have been granted members of the corps under Fire Fighters War Services Benefits Act, the Civilian War Pensions and Allowance Act, etc. The Committee suggests that, as these measures are reviewed and amended from time to time, consideration might be given to providing wider coverage to members of the corps as circumstances warrant. This applies particularly to the War Veterans Allowance as the corps members reach age-eligibility.

22. The corps raised the question of their members eligibility for the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp. Hitherto, this medal has been awarded only to Naval, Army, and Air Force personnel under Army Order 128-2, January 2, 1947. The Committee realizes that a matter of this kind is beyond the jurisdiction of the Department of Veterans Affairs and recommends that it be referred to the Department of National Defence for further consideration.

23. During recent days there has been some public discussion of proposed amendments to the Civil Service Act. These discussions have included references to the operation of the Veterans' Preference.

24. To clear up any uncertainty on this point the Committee heartily endorses the principle of the Veterans' Preference in the Civil Service Act and recommends that, in any contemplated amendments to the Act, this principle remain unchanged.

#### CONCLUSION

25. Throughout all the deliberations your Committee has been given generous assistance by many officials of several government departments. This applies especially to officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs. To them your Committee conveys its grateful thanks. It also tenders its sincere thanks to the Clerks of the Committees Branch who have rendered invaluable service in guiding its deliberations.