

14-15 GEORGE V, A. 1924

Let us suppose now that in the Great War, something similar would have occurred, and Canada, instead of being represented by hundreds of thousands of men, would have been represented by one man. And let us suppose further that the result would have been the same, namely, that our soldier would have returned to Canada victorious. I ask this Committee what would have been the reward offered by Canada to the soldier who would have fought and won her battle? No prize nor gift would have been thought too great to offer our victorious soldier. No honour would have been too high, no treasure too precious. Such are the sentiments, I am sure, of all the members of this Committee as well as of Parliament and of the whole Nation.

But, instead of having to reward one victorious soldier, this country has had to reward hundreds of thousands, and on that account the reward was not and could not be all that we would have wished it to be. Canada, impoverished by a long struggle, having seen her public debt increased eight to ten fold, has done the best she could for her returned men, and is still willing and proud to continue doing in the future the best she possibly can for her returned men.

These are my sentiments and those of the members of this Committee as well, I am quite sure.

SUMMARY OF ADDRESS MADE TO ORGANIZATION MEETING OF
PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON PENSIONS AND RE-ESTABLISHMENT
ON MAY 2, BY THE HONOURABLE H. S. BELAND.

Mr. CHAIRMAN, in addressing your Committee I am anxious in the first place to make clear the fact that my remarks are not in any way to be considered as instructions. I am very anxious that the Committee should, as in the past, give careful consideration to the various phases of the subject before them and to arrive at their conclusions after close investigation into the various matters based on evidence that they receive. I would not desire either at this stage or at any other time, to influence the decisions of your Committee in any way. I am making these comments to you simply for the purpose of laying before you my own opinion on the various matters which will be available for your consideration in the same degree as any other evidence you may receive.

As regards the work of your Committee, you are aware of course that the Ralston Royal Commission which was appointed at the close of the session of 1922, and which has gone into the whole matter of soldiers' re-establishment, pension, and land settlement, very fully, and has visited in this connection and received evidence in every large centre in Canada, has not yet submitted its final report and recommendations. It is my impression that while evidence was presented to the Commission on the question of land settlement, it will not be as fully dealt with as other phases, and that your Committee should in the first instance consider the question of land settlement, particularly in view of the urgency of the situation brought about by rapid changes in land and other values. Very insistent demands have been made by the ex-soldiers who have taken up the land settlement scheme, for a re-valuation of their land, stock, and equipment, based on the changes met with in the values of these items in the past few years. It is my opinion, as I have indicated, that your Committee should first deal with this phase of the subject, which is no doubt covered in the reference made to you under the general heading of Re-establishment.

When the Ralston Commission Report is received, I will make an immediate motion in the House that it should be referred to your Committee for consideration and report as to the Government action that should be taken to give the necessary effect to such recommendations and which in the opinion of your Committee should be dealt with. This may involve changes in the present legislation either in pension or soldiers' re-establishment, or in both.