

and see these women as I know them to be. I suppose most of the hon. members who are listening to me went to the little red schoolhouse about the same time as I did and read the old third and fourth school book. If they did they will remember the old-time Song of the Shirt:

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat, in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread,—

The women whom I am pleading for to-day and intend to make the sole topic of my speech in this debate cannot get jobs at all. Most of them who are employed are mere charwomen; most of them have spent their lives in bringing up a family, or possibly have been attending a sick husband over weary months and long years, and have thus unfitted themselves for the competition of the modern labour market. They are not old enough to qualify for an old age pension, and they are too old to obtain work in our factories or war production plants. The time when they could receive the mother's allowance has long since gone by, because in the most instances their families have now passed sixteen years of age. So, without work, or in most cases the ability to work, they are depending upon charity, living in the houses of relatives to whose economy they are not able to contribute. Their position is a most unenviable one. They are the wreckage of world war number one.

Parliament in the course of this debate will concern itself with post-war problems. I hear them discussed in almost every speech; and there will be many speeches, no doubt, in which reference will be made to two of the four freedoms of the Atlantic charter—freedom from want and freedom from fear. We shall be speaking, in an academic way for the most part, about these matters; for it will be a want of the future which is to be relieved and not of the present, and so in a sense we shall be discussing academic problems. But the one I am laying before parliament now is not a problem of the future only; it is a problem of the present. The fear and the want are right here now; and it seems to me that if this parliament wishes itself to be taken seriously in its discussion of the abolition of fear and want as a post-war problem, it had better take care of the fear and the want which are before our eyes at this very moment. It can easily be done. I am only asking for consideration on behalf of the widows of soldiers of the last war—it might even be restricted to those who saw service abroad, although I do not advocate that; I can see no special reason for drawing that line—widows

of men who served twenty-five years ago and who are in necessitous circumstances. That is all. I am asking not for a general pension for these people, but simply for the relieving of the distress of those in necessitous circumstances. If this house cannot do that for the women whose men were assured by our predecessors that they would never suffer want, then we need not be expected to be believed or be taken seriously when we talk about freedom from want and freedom from fear in the years to come.

I may have said some things which it was unnecessary to say in view of the assurance just given by the minister, but perhaps what I have said will do no harm; and it may strengthen the hand of the minister in preparing the measure to know that at least on this side of the house there are many who agree with it. I know I can speak for every one of those whose names appear on the document which I read; I think I can speak for every private member on this side of the house, when I say that the dire necessities of these soldiers' widows should be relieved, and relieved immediately.

I congratulate the minister of pensions upon what he has said. He said only a word or two, but as I caught it I thought he gave the assurance that at this very session of the house steps will be taken to deal with this matter. Is that what he said?

An hon. MEMBER: That is what he said.

Mr. GARDINER: There is provision in the estimates.

Mr. ROEBUCK: There is, or will be, provision in the estimates? Well, that fills me with joy. I am happy, very happy to have received that assurance. These women have been looking to me to say something on their behalf. I congratulate my hon. friend across the way upon what he may have contributed to this matter. I see that the good women have put me down as an honorary patron of the Toronto association. It will make me happy indeed to tell them of what has taken place in the house this afternoon.

Mr. W. F. KUHLE (Jasper-Edson): Mr. Speaker, to say that we are living in the most serious period of the history of mankind thus far is to make a statement which by now is almost worn threadbare. Nevertheless I believe far more importance is to be attached to that statement than many are prepared to acknowledge. I am not thinking so much of the outcome of this war. We are all heartened, as has been expressed by most of those who have already spoken, by the turn of events in