

Civil Re-establishment of Ex-Service Men

By IAN A. MACKENZIE

CANADIANS are deeply conscious of their indebtedness to the men who serve their country in its armed forces. The steps taken after the last war to effect the civil re-establishment of those who had served in the Great War, particularly those who were casualties, and those who had actually been under fire, are familiar in broad outline, if not in detail, to most Canadians. Pensions, war veterans' allowances, vocational training, hospital treatment, land settlement, returned soldiers' insurance, and gratuities were arranged for, and it is a matter of congratulation that these measures never became subject of party strife.

Immediately on the outbreak of this war, in September, 1939, steps were taken to extend the provisions of the Pension Act to members of the armed forces on active service, and from time to time amendments have been made, as outlined in another article in this issue.

The Dominion Government in December, 1939,¹ appointed a special Cabinet Committee on Demobilization and Rehabilitation to study and advise upon measures which will be required to meet the problems arising from demobilization and the discharge from time to time of members of the forces during and after the present war. This Cabinet Committee was authorized to appoint a General Advisory Committee selected from the personnel of Government departments, and to consult provincial and municipal authorities and public service organizations generally.

The General Advisory Committee, under the Chairman of the Canadian Pension Commission, was organized in

October, 1940,² and a series of sub-committees appointed to deal with specialized phases of the problem. Broadly speaking, the chief governing principles which are guiding the Committee in its work may be stated as follows:

(1) To avoid duplication of machinery and clashes of jurisdiction on the one hand, and to avoid gaps in administration on the other.

(2) The Employment Service of Canada established under the Unemployment Insurance Act will give specialized attention to the placement of ex-service men.

(3) Information, guidance and directional services to be furnished by the Department of Pensions and National Health.

(4) Pension and other legislation to be extended and modified from time to time, to meet the new conditions of the present war, as may be found advisable.

(5) The work of the General Advisory Committee to be kept strictly advisory in character—administrative responsibility being assumed by appropriate departments and branches of the executive government.

Prior to the passing of this Order-in-Council the work was being done almost entirely by government officials. But authority has now been granted to name recognized experts from outside the service to assist on the sub-committees.

The General Advisory Committee is also authorized to bring before it persons specially qualified to advise on any matters coming within its terms of reference.

It may be convenient to examine the nature of the problem which confronts the Committee, and to indicate the various measures which have been adopted, the policies which are being studied, and the general administrative organization being

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Honourable Ian A. Mackenzie, K.C., M.P., M.A., LL.B., is Minister of Pensions and National Health, and Chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Demobilization and Rehabilitation. For further details relative to rehabilitation, the reader is referred to a speech made by Mackenzie in the Dominion House of Commons on December 6th, 1940.

(1) P.C. 4068.

(2) P.C. 5421.

developed to take care of the whole problem. In the first place it is noted that the great majority of the members of the forces are born in Canada and have been brought up in our schools, and have in the main some contact with homes and communities throughout the Dominion. This is mentioned because in the Great War a large proportion of those who served in the C.E.F. were born in the British Isles and many of them had been immigrants who had arrived in Canada in the years prior to 1914 and had not become established in the country of their choice. Those now serving in Canada's armed forces have more intimate knowledge of the communities from which they come and efforts are being made to retain the Canadian atmosphere and background while they are serving overseas. The work of the Auxiliary Services (the Salvation Army, Knights of Columbus, Young Men's Christian Association, and the Canadian Legion), both in Canada and overseas, assists in keeping the Canadian environment. The Canadian Legion Educational Services, whilst interested in all the informal types of education, has concentrated on the formal side on correspondence work to assist members of the forces to complete their high school standing. Upwards of 15,000 are registered in these secondary school courses. Furthermore, all branches of the services, owing to the mechanized character of the war, are finding it necessary to establish a great deal of technical and trade training, which will be productive of many skills useful for civil occupations on demobilization.

1. PRESENT PROBLEM OF DISCHARGED MEN

During the past seventeen months all arms of the service have been endeavouring to bring their units to a high level of efficiency. Strict training and stringent medical examination have eliminated from the forces, particularly the active army, many who though not unfitted for civil life are unfit for active military service, under the present high standards.

There have been more than 20,000

discharged from the armed services, but many of these represent persons who did some temporary guard duty in their own localities. Some served for a few days or a few weeks; some were discharged as under-age (false attestation); quite a large proportion as unlikely to become efficient soldiers and a number were so discharged as a punishment. About half of the number were discharged as physically unfit under existing standards. This does not mean unfit for civilian work, but unfit for military service. It should be made clear that up to the end of last year the number of these men who have been discharged who had seen service overseas was less than 1,000.

At once it is clear that in respect of these men the Dominion Government has incurred considerable expenditure in taking them into the army, in medical treatment of disabilities, most of which were of a pre-enlistment character. They have never (with the exception of a few hundred who have returned from overseas) served under fire in this war, and for various reasons have not been able to render the country any military service in action with the enemy. In most cases such service as they have had has been in their native province, and their civil life has not been interrupted for many months. In fact the majority of them have served under six months, less than one-half the period of compulsory service of the draftees in the United States. However, it is desirable that these men should be absorbed into civil life again as quickly as possible, and that they should begin to assist the country in non-military pursuits suited to their capacity. But it would be a fatal mistake to assume that the case of men who have been unable to render any service in the face of the enemy merits more consideration than that given to veterans of the Great War who fought at Ypres, Vimy, Passchendaele and Cambrai, or to assume that their cases are parallel to those of men who remain in the army to fight the war. It may be said to the credit of the majority of these men who have so willingly offered their

services to their country that they have returned to civil life, found employment, and are carrying on loyally. A few cases of genuine hardship exist where men have left steady employment and found it difficult to regain their former jobs. There remains a residue of problem cases of discharged men somewhat debilitated, unskilled and, therefore, not near the top of an eligible list, as far as employers are concerned.

2. SPECIAL MEASURES

The measures taken to assist in the civil re-establishment of ex-service men are as follows:

(1) Provision of rehabilitation grant of thirty days' pay and dependents' allowances for men honourably discharged after six months' service or more.¹

(2) Preferences in employment in all munitions and construction contracts made by the Dominion Government have been arranged for.

(3) A War Emergency Training Programme, under the Department of Labour, with a scale of allowances has been announced, with preference for discharged men.

(4) Committees have been formed in all the large centres to assist civil re-establishment.

(5) The provisions of the Pension Act and the machinery of the Department of Pensions and National Health in respect of hospital treatment, etc., are being utilized to deal with casualties.

(6) If a man is in hospital under the Department of Pensions and National Health at the time of his discharge, treatment is continued and a special allowance equal to assigned pay and dependents' allowance to the man's dependents is continued until it has been determined whether the man is eligible for pension.

(7) Until the establishment of the Dominion administrative machinery described in the next section, the Veterans' Assistance Committees and the District

Administrators of the Department of Pensions and National Health are giving special attention to discharged men of this war.

3. STRENGTHENING OF ADMINISTRATION MACHINERY

(a) Under the Unemployment Insurance Commission there is being set up the Employment Service of Canada which will give specialized attention to veterans. This is now in process of organization, and will be an effective system for placement.

(b) The Veterans' Welfare Division of the Department of Pensions and National Health has been established, and personnel is now being selected. The duties of this Division shall be to give special consideration to the problems of the men discharged from the armed forces during and after the present war. The functions of the Veterans' Welfare Officers will be two-fold:

(a) To see that every requirement of a discharged man which can be assisted by an existing Government agency is brought to the attention of the appropriate department and followed up systematically;

(b) To bring the man's other problems to the attention of such voluntary organizations and committees of citizens as exist for the assistance of ex-service men in his own community.

An occupational history form is being secured in respect of every man to whom rehabilitation grant is paid, and of all members of the armed forces, in order to document the Employment Service of Canada, the Veterans' Welfare Division, and the General Advisory Committee on Demobilization and Rehabilitation.

Since the last war there have developed many Dominion agencies dealing with various phases of the public service which will be able to turn their attention to the carrying out of policies relating to civil re-establishment.

The Youth Training Plan of the Department of Labour, which works in close co-operation with the provincial

(1) This is in addition to \$35 clothing allowance. Owing to deferred pay system, single men who have served overseas will have a considerable amount to their credit on their return to Canada.

administrations, constitutes a useful framework for vocational training. The various divisions and branches of the Department of Pensions and National Health have a background of experience of past policies, whilst the Canadian Pension Commission and the War Veterans' Allowance Board have many skilled public servants who know a great deal about ex-soldier problems. In the event of steps being taken to assist land settlement, the Soldiers' Settlement Board is in a position to carry out administration; whilst the Director of Housing in the Department of Finance can place his knowledge at the disposal of the Government in connection with any housing project which may develop. The Department of National Defence is naturally responsible for the work of actual demobilization, and it is hoped that by categorization of the men while in service demobilization plans can be made in the light of full knowledge of civilian opportunities, taking into account the experience gained in the last war.

Already an approach has been made to the premiers of each province suggesting the formation of planning or advisory bodies similar to the General Advisory Committee of the Dominion in the hope that local effort and initiative may be

fully utilized. Meantime the Dominion Government has begun to accumulate information and sub-committees are meeting regularly to discuss questions of post-discharge pay, employment, retraining of special casualties, vocational training, interrupted education, land settlement, the administration of special funds, preferences in employment in the public service, and other projects designed to assist men to regain their footing in civil life.

Use is being made of the forthcoming census of 1941, of research by students of national problems, and of information gathered from the records of the services under the various Government departments. It is felt that the rehabilitation of the ex-service man of this war must be the responsibility not of one department but of all the departments of the Government; not of any section of the community, but of the whole community. It is hoped that the goodwill of every provincial government and every citizen will be secured to the end that our fighting men will on their return find not only a welcome home, but renewed opportunity to serve the country in new civil employment and in the making of homes. This cannot be done unless it is the business of all of us.

Canadian Pensions For War Disabilities

A WAR pension is money owed by us all to a sailor, soldier, airman, or his dependents because of his disablement or death. The object of the pension is to ensure for the pensioner and his dependents maintenance which he is unable to provide.

One result of the first Great War was to give many men, who formerly felt

nothing of it, a feeling of personal responsibility towards their community. The universal desire to compensate fairly those who suffered by their war service is a part of that feeling. When compensation is thought of, pension naturally suggests itself. But there was for a time much discussion of pension scandals. For that reason, there is usually associated with our desire to compensate by fair pensions those disabled in war, a feeling that war pensions are inevitably subject to abuse and graft. So, there was every-

EDITOR'S NOTE: For the information in this article we are indebted to the Chairman of the Canadian Pension Commission, who is also Chairman of the General Advisory Committee on Demobilization and Rehabilitation, which is an Inter-Departmental Committee appointed by the Dominion Government.