

WHAT LIBERALS HAVE DONE FOR VETERANS; WHAT SENATE PREVENTED THEM FROM DOING

Severe Arraignment of Autocratic Actions of Conservative-Controlled Upper Chamber—Measures Slain or Emasculated—Troubles with Pension Board Which Promised to Protect Widows and Orphans—King Government's Efforts Nullified—Noted War Worker Says Liberals Entitled to the Thanks of the Returned Men.

W. T. House, 157 Meagher avenue, Toronto, who has been active in work for the welfare of veterans, but who has not been identified with politics, has addressed the following open letter, "to my comrades of the Great War."

Comrades: I feel it is my duty to speak out at this time. I believe your interests are vitally at stake at the present time and if you read on you will find out why I think so.

You will wonder why I write under my own name undesignated by the office I hold. Soldier organizations are supposed to be non-political, hence I do not use my official designation, yet I might say that I have taken a very keen interest in the welfare of returned men for some years and have been here on pension matters. My interest in their welfare is, I think, greater now than ever, but it is mainly a sense of outraged justice which causes me, ordinarily of the modest violet type, to appear before you.

In life it is wise occasionally to pause a while to consider what has been done in the past, to note our progress and to map out a rough plan for future action. It appears to me that this is an excellent time for such a pause, now when the Legion is just forming and its future is to be determined.

To begin with let us review the past. The Conservatives were in power when the armistice was signed and they were in power for three years after the armistice; let us take this period in review first.

When the war was on, we as citizens were promised certain things if we would enlist. These promises were broadly that if we should unfortunately lose our lives because of service, that our wives and little ones and dependents generally would be generously cared for; that if we returned disabled that a grateful country would see that we were pensioned in accordance with our disability and that so far as money would compensate, no one should lose anything by going to the war. We one our part agreed to an indefinite period of service—until we were killed, disabled or the war ended.

We fulfilled our part of the agreement to the best of our several abilities, but how have the people of Canada, as represented by governments, fulfilled theirs? Only in part. I am sorry to say, for not a man who served but lost something—some of their lives, some a limb, some were condemned to a short life on account of the ravages of consumption, some have other disabilities, and all who returned suffered from lack of employment as well as serving for very low pay when high wages were the rule for those who stayed behind. You, my comrades, said to the government, in effect, "Look after the widows, the orphans and the disabled first, we who are more nearly fit will wait our turn"; unfortunately all the widows, orphans and disabled are not yet taken care of and those who are nearly but not quite as good as they were when they enlisted are still waiting.

Cold, Harsh and Severe.

On a hasty glance one might blame the late government, but let us not be too hasty but begin at the beginning and look deeper. In 1919 the Conservative government passed the pension act. This act was plenty broad enough to give every man in the forces a pension if they were disabled in any particular on their return, or if a disease originated on service, but did not become noticeable till afterwards. The act was to be administered by three commissioners, who were to have absolute power to grant or refuse pensions—a very dangerous provision and a very unfair power to hand over to any body, of men when the happiness of so many was at stake.

The Conservative government chose the three commissioners to administer this act, and so far as the interests of the disabled were concerned, the choice could not have been worse. The administration was cold, harsh and very severe, and your protests to the Conservative governments were of no avail; in fact, in 1921 this cold, severe administration of the pension act went further still and the Conservative government of the day passed the famous "as such" amendment to the pension act, which amendment cut off thousands of pensions and prospective pensions.

So great was your dissatisfaction with Conservative treatment of the problems of the returned men that at the elections of December, 1921, you and your friends turned the Conservative government out of power and put the Liberals and Progressives in.

Before we proceed to examine your interests under the Liberals and Progressives, I want you to carry your minds back to 1921 and contrast conditions then with conditions as you know them today. Under the Conservative regime you had a pension act that, to be effective, must be administered in a sympathetic liberal manner, but instead of that you had a very severe legal interpretation given to the act, and where two interpretations were possible legally you often had the most severe one chosen.

The intention of the act was that the disabled man should receive the

benefit of the doubt. If doubt there should be; at the same time there was no appeal from the decisions of these severe judges, and as was shown afterwards these judges were too much concerned with saving the country money and not enough interested in giving the disabled ex-service man that which the people through parliament had said they should have.

1921 to 1926. We will now pass to a review of the period December, 1921, to June, 1926, covering the Liberal and Progressive era of power, and this section will show clearly the trend of Conservative opinion and action with regard to ex-service men.

In the first place, the pension board became even more harsh and severe in their judgments. The reason is best known to themselves, but my guess is that they were angry because their political party had been turned out and that they were playing politics by trying to turn the returned men against the Liberals.

Something drastic and spectacular was needed to draw the attention of returned men and the public to these tactics and Comrade McNeill did it. You will all remember his famous telegram broadcast throughout the country charging the pension board with cold-blooded administration, concealment of the true facts from the parliamentary committee of inquiry and a few other things.

Before condemning the Liberal government in their first session for not knowing these things, it would be well to remember that the pension commissioners were appointed for ten years, were to be eligible for re-appointment, could not be removed in the ordinary sense because the stipulation "for cause" as a legal term does not mean what you and I as ordinary citizens would expect it to mean, so that though they had been appointed by the previous government, yet officially they were, on pension matters, the advisors of this new Liberal government.

As a direct result of the action taken by Comrade McNeill, the parliamentary committee recommended to parliament that a royal commission be forthwith appointed to fully consider the soldier question in all its bearings and to make recommendations of the commission be adopted by the government. Parliament adopted the recommendation of its committee and appointed J. L. Ralston, Esq., Walter McKee, Esq., and A. E. Dubus, Esq., to be the members of the commission. These gentlemen were well known in the business and social life of our country and were well qualified to act on such a commission.

The Ralston Commission. As the Ralston commission was to travel from coast to coast, you and I hailed with delight a chance to appear in person to state our grievances, and we felt that at last we were free to speak on any subject within the scope of the inquiry. The commission also had power to call as witnesses others than returned men, and these were called as required.

The Ralston commission spent two years in exhaustive inquiry, considering in their judgments the interests of the state as well as the needs of returned men. That the Ralston commission was a great benefit to us there is no possible doubt and was the first great benefit under the regime of the Liberals.

The next step in our favor was not long in following. Soon after the Ralston commission commenced its investigation two of the pension commissioners resigned, and were replaced by the Liberal government with two who were more in keeping with the spirit of the pension act. Unfortunately, the chairman of the pension board, (a lawyer) did not see fit to resign, and knew also that he could not be forced out by law. He is with us yet, but I sincerely hope that legion will not support him for re-appointment when his term of office runs out.

In February, 1923, the Ralston commission made its first report, largely justifying Comrade McNeill's opinion of the pension board. In April, 1923, the Ralston commission made recommendations of an urgent nature, in particular an appeal board who should hear appeals against decisions by the D. S. C. R. and pensions board.

During the session of 1923 the Liberal government passed some twelve amendments to the pension act, every one of which was of benefit to the disabled or the widows and orphans, the two principal ones being the eliminating of the famous "as such" amendment and the appointment of the federal appeal board. And now the Conservative senate began to show its hand.

Liberals Handicapped by Senate. I'm afraid that very few of you, comrades, realize that the Conservatives have a substantial majority in the senate, but such is the fact. With a moment's thought you will realize the handicap that a Conservative senate can be to a Liberal government. In this case the senate amended the new section of the pension act dealing with the federal appeal board, greatly restricting the usefulness of that body, so far as we

were concerned, and insisted on the House of Commons agreeing to the amendment. It is true the Commons did not have to agree, but since to refuse meant the loss of all this beneficial legislation, I believe the action taken by the House of Commons was justified, on the principle that half a loaf is better than no bread at all.

We come then to the session of 1924 and to more unjust action on the part of the senate with its Conservative majority. In a three-hour period they considered the twenty sections of proposed amendments to the pension act and threw nearly every one out.

Let us look into this more closely. In 1922, when the Ralston commission was appointed, the ex-service men were delighted and set to work enthusiastically to gather together and classify the thousands of cases of those who felt that the pension board had not treated them fairly. Sick men in sanatoria and hospitals throughout the country, whose cases for pension were hopeless before, were instilled with new hope and all did their bit to give the Ralston commission a clear idea of the existing situation.

I want to emphasize that the proposals before finally reaching the senate had passed through four stages: First, we ourselves had thoroughly discussed these proposals, and had thrown out those of a frivolous or drastic nature, and those which would cost much money in proportion to the number to be benefited.

Secondly, the Ralston commission had considered our proposals for two years and as was to be expected, did not concur in all our suggestions, though large numbers were agreed to.

Thirdly, the special committee of the House of Commons, consisting of about 30 members, had covered the ground again, during almost the whole session of 1924.

Fourth, the recommendations of this special committee were embodied in a bill and presented to the House of Commons, who agreed to it in its entirety and the bill was then sent to the senate.

Senate's New Plan. This bill was thought to be non-contentious on account of the very large amount of preparatory investigation, and so was reserved for the last day of the session. The honorable gentlemen of the senate complained that they were not being given time to consider this bill, but that happens every session, because the House of Commons is not expected to sit idle while the senate considers the bills passed by the House of Commons during its last few days of labor, and at every session there are a few bills agreed on between the parties as non-contentious, which are reserved for the last.

Again, the senate could have known in the main what the bill would contain, because each of them could have had a copy of this Ralston report and could have had each day a printed copy of the deliberations of the special committee of the House of Commons. But no; in a three-hour session they dealt with the bill and very little was passed by them.

But a new plea had been introduced by the honorable gentlemen of the senate, or if not the new, at least new as an official pronouncement. This plea was that the Ralston commission in making these recommendations had not considered the cost to the country.

I submit they were appointed as judges as between the state and its disabled citizens returned from war. If you or I contract a debt and we are haled before a judge, would that judge give judgment in our favor on the grounds that we did not know beforehand how great the debt would be? Rather not; he would quickly tell us we should have found out before we incurred the debt.

Granted that the war cost far more than we could have foreseen in 1914, is that any reason why those disabled in the service should be made to bear such a very heavy share of that cost on their own shoulders, shoulders already bowed down with sickness and financial care?

Did this country say to itself in 1917: "The burden is growing too heavy, we will recall our men"? Or, it didn't. Did we, in 1917, say to ourselves, "The country will never be able to pension the widows, orphans and disabled, nor to raise our pay to the equivalent of what they are receiving in Canada; we will go home"? No, we did not suggest such a monstrous thing. The contract was made, yet those who withhold our pensions can raise their own.

Again the Tory Viewpoint.

It will become any member of our senate to talk about too much cost—it is not a case of too much cost but a case of wrong distribution of cost—let everyone pay their share and don't make sick men more sick by throwing on them the whole burden of supporting themselves and their families. It is obviously unjust that anyone should make money out of such a beastly thing as war—I say take from those who did make money out of our sacrifice and give to those who suffer.

The senate can congratulate itself that it saved the country a potential debt of a few thousand dollars, because when that bill was so amended in 1924, many of your suffering comrades doubtless thought their last hope was gone and simply passed beyond.

Let us come then to the session of 1925 and again we see the Tory

viewpoint with regard to the war-worn ex-service men. Apparently your service bureau in Ottawa was doing too good a work in collecting evidence in favor of your suffering comrades and in pressing their claims on the pension board, so that it was going to be necessary to ask Parliament for an increased amount.

In following out the recommendations of the Ralston commission the general government proposed to put in the hands of trustees a part of the interest on your Canada funds for the express purpose of continuing this work on behalf of the disabled, the widows and the orphans. The senate refused to pass this bill unless that clause were deleted, so that your bureau was threatened with a stoppage for lack of funds.

Earlier in the session a senator had been very active in an attempt that being made to discredit your service bureau. Fortunately they did not succeed. Some legislation thrown out by the senate in 1924 was embodied among others in the 1925 bill to the senate and passed without a murmur, even though it was in the dying hours of the session, the last session before the election of 1925.

Liberals Entitled to Thanks. Recent history is fresh in your minds and you know what happened to the legislation in favor of our former comrades, and the old age pension act, which is similar in scope to our legislation and by which many of you would have benefited.

You today are sitting in judgment on the different political parties, but your judgment cannot be sound without all facts before you. I submit that both parties have clearly shown their intentions toward the returned men. I ask you, does it look as if the Conservatives are the friends of the returned men when the job is done? Is not the Liberal Government entitled to thanks from the returned men for what they have done for us? The Liberal Government, made no large promise of what they would do for us, yet have they not given us much and have they not been willing to give us more?

In judging them I ask that you consider the handicaps under which they labored with, as first a wholly Conservative advisory board and later in having to contend with a Conservative Senate. There is no doubt the Liberals and Progressives are the parties for the poor people, and that is the class to which most of us belong, unfortunately.

We have reviewed the past. What of the future? Your first step is clear—get into the legion and stay in. Don't be a member in name only, but attend the meetings and help frame the policy of your association. If your views do not meet with general approval and majority vote, stay with it—don't be a quitter—your views may change or you may be able to convert others to your way of thinking. As I see it there is no reason why the legion should not take action on any question affecting ex-service men, and that opens up a very wide vista. The ideals of the legion are high and worthy of your continuous support.

In conclusion let me say that I personally have everything to lose and nothing to gain by this talk, yet my sense of justice and of right compels me to speak. If you think I have exaggerated the conditions I would refer you to the main sources of my own information—the debates of the Senate, the reports of the various parliamentary committees dealing with these questions, and the four reports of the Ralston royal commission. To those individuals in the Conservative party who have been really helpful I may say that I sincerely thank them and regret that there are not more like them.

Thanking you one and all, comrades, for your patience, I remain, Faithfully yours, W. T. HOUSE.

THRASHING IN FULL SWING.

Principal of Bloomfield School is Laid Aside.

Bloomfield, Sept. 6.—Continued wet weather is delaying harvest and much of the grain remains to be drawn to the barns. Thrashing is in full swing and grain is turning out well. School opened last week. Miss G. Smith, principal, was unable to take charge, and Miss Mildred Burr is supplying.

Rev. Mr. Reddick has returned from his vacation at Conasaug Lake, Homer White and wife, and Webster Talcott and wife are attending Toronto exhibition. Fred Gilbert has gone to Detroit.

New sidewalks are being laid in the village and the back street is being graveled. Richard Jenkins was at Kingston last week attending the funeral of his nephew, who was killed at Portsmouth penitentiary. The gravel truck, owned and operated by a Toronto firm for the past two months in building the road leading to Wellington, has been laid off and teams are now taking its place.

THE SCHOOL BELL RINGS.

Bongard's, Sept. 6.—Schools at S.S. No. 2 and 3 re-opened on Sept. 6, with Miss Robinson and Miss Blakely as teachers respectively. Mrs. J. B. Bongard, who has been visiting at the home of Mrs. J. D. Bongard, has returned to Toronto. M. Queta occupied the pulpit at Bongard's Church on Sunday last. Miss Helen Bongard left last week for Toronto, where she will spend some time.

Mrs. S. Wright visited recently with friends at Cressy. Mr. and Mrs. E. H. Harrison, Ploton, accompanied by Mrs. Kipp, London, Ont., were callers at Mrs. J. D. Bongard's on Monday. Miss Lillian Thurston has returned home from Indian Point. Mrs. Allan Harrison spent Thursday at her home here.

SLAYER OF GUARD IS COMMITTED FOR TRIAL

Thomas McCoskey's Preliminary Hearing Before County Magistrate Bradshaw.

Thomas McCoskey, an inmate of Portsmouth penitentiary, was committed for trial, at his preliminary hearing on Thursday afternoon in the penitentiary, on the charge that he had murdered one M. E. Jenkins contrary to the criminal code. The information was dated September 9th and was sworn out by Crown-Attorney T. J. Rigney. The accused man was represented by Mr. Cecil G. Frost, of Lindsay, as counsel and of course was not asked to plead to the charge. County Magistrate J. W. Bradshaw presided.

McCoskey Interested. There was nothing of a very sensational nature brought out in the evidence which was practically a repetition of that taken at the coroner's inquest. The chief interest centred around the accused man who appeared to take an intelligent interest in what was going on and who displayed a slight trace of nervousness as betrayed by the way he flinched with his hands during the proceedings. His demeanour for the most part was passive rather than sulky. He glanced around the room watching now the witness giving evidence, now the magistrates, and then perhaps turning his eyes on the crown prosecutor or his own counsel.

McCoskey's face masked very adequately what was going on in his brain but once or twice the veriest shadow of a smile showed about his mouth and then in an instant vanished. He gave no sign of recognition when his four companions on the fence building gang came in, nor did he show any sign when Mr. S. Sewell and Mr. H. Hill turned, looked him in the face, and positively identified him as the man whom they chased and helped capture on the morning of August 25th, other than to meet their eyes for a second and then continue his roving glance around the room.

Bar Took Attention.

The only time during the grim proceedings when McCoskey's whole attention was riveted on the serious business was when transpiring, was when a crow bar was exhibited in the court and Mr. Hill positively identified it, by the blood stains and hair which still attached to one end of it, as the same bar which the convict threw down when he was arrested and the one with which the murder is alleged to have been committed. When the bar was marked as exhibit "A" and placed back in the corner his rigidity of position relaxed and he relapsed into his attitude of passive interest.

The cross-questioning of Mr. Cecil Frost, counsel for McCoskey, was directed very much toward finding out if the accused man by his action showed any special agitation either directly before or after he is alleged to have attacked Guard Jenkins. Also Mr. Frost queried the other convicts rather closely about the relations between themselves and McCoskey, between McCoskey and the late Guard Jenkins, and as to McCoskey's general temperament and behavior. The consensus of the opinion of the four other convicts in the gang at the time the attack took place, was that McCoskey showed no special agitation on the day in question. They also said that he was easy to get along with, that they had never seen him do anything or say anything that would give them a hint that his was a brutal nature, that the relations between McCoskey and Guard Jenkins, as far as they knew, were of the best. These men testified that McCoskey understood the English language and spoke it fluently enough to make himself easily understood.

Suggested Escaping.

On significant thing was revealed by Mr. Frost's questioning when inmate George E. Thompson told, when pressed by the lawyer to be quite frank, that on the Thursday or Friday preceding the murder, he and McCoskey had been standing near the warden's office and McCoskey had suggested to him that they jump into the car and make a dash for liberty. Thompson said he had treated the matter as a joke and McCoskey had never returned to it again. The other prisoners when questioned said that to their knowledge McCoskey had never contemplated or plotted to escape. Each of these men was asked individually if he could swear that Guard Jenkins had not sent McCoskey to fetch the crow bar on the day in question and each replied that he could not swear.

The Important Witness.

The most important Crown witness produced was inmate William Davis who saw a man hit Guard Jenkins two blows with a crow bar and could positively identify Thomas McCoskey as the man and the crow bar as the same one which was used in taking the forms off the cement fence posts. Other witnesses saw McCoskey running away with the crow bar, and heard blows struck, and saw McCoskey in a position to strike a blow, and Kenneth Potter and his sister Mary saw a man feel the guard but could not identify the man. Davis alone saw one or more blows struck and could positively identify the man who struck them as Thomas McCoskey of their work gang and the same man who ran down the road with the crow bar in

his hand and was later brought back in the custody of Scout Cox.

Had Nothing to Say.

When the evidence was all taken Mr. Rigney held that sufficient cause had been shown to have the man committed for trial at the first next court of competent jurisdiction and the magistrate ruled that this be done. Before committing him, however, Mr. Bradshaw asked McCoskey if he had anything to say on his own behalf and in a high screechy voice the convict replied to the effect that he didn't wish to say anything. The next court competent to deal with a murder charge is the fall session, which opens here on September 21st with Mr. Justice Logie presiding.

TOMATO HARVEST IS ON

The Luscious Fruit Is Being Drawn To The Cannery. Victoria, Sept. 6.—The rainy weather of the past few days has delayed harvesting operations in this section. Among those who attended Toronto exhibition were Mr. and Mrs. Ray Fox and daughters Vivian and Margaret, Miss Audrey Brickman and Mr. D. MacNamara school reopened on Wednesday with Miss Kelly of Oshawa again in charge.

Earl Fox has been spending a few days with his uncle, Mr. S. Munroe at Crofton. Mr. Harry Ashton, Toronto, with his mother, Mrs. S. Ash-ton, Rednersville called at Mr. H. Pulver's on Friday. Mrs. Julia Fox spent the past two weeks with her son Burton, at Wellington. Many from here attended Belleville fair during the past week. Mr. and Mrs. I. Fymer and Mrs. G. Bass called at Melvin Pulver's, Sunday evening.

Mrs. H. Pulver attended the funeral of the late Miss Norma Fymer in Picton on Saturday. The tomato harvest is in full swing here. The tomatoes are being drawn to the canning factory in Rednersville. Mr. and Mrs. L. L. Price, ad son, Selby, accompanied by Mrs. L. O. Warren and family, Malorytown spent Thursday at M. Pulver's.

Miss Gladys Pope spent the past week with her friends Miss Beryl Weese; Roblin's Mills. Mr. I. Delong has returned to his home in Toronto after spending some time with his nephew, Mr. Willie Fox.

A good many brickbats are thrown at society by those who can not get in.

THE NEW RIDEAU SCHOOL IS OPENED

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expressing gratification to His Honor, the Lieutenant-Governor for coming to Kingston. He said His Honor came to Kingston because he was interested in the welfare of the youth of the country. He showed by his visit that he considered that there was nothing bigger than the boys and girls of to-day who are to become the citizens of tomorrow.

Mr. Nickle paid a warm tribute to the Lieutenant-Governor, stating that he had accomplished a great deal by his genial hospitality in binding the forces within Ontario, and also between Ontario and Quebec. When the history of Ontario was completed, the name of Hon. Mr. Cockburn would occupy a place on the roll of fame.

"Make up your mind about the position you are going to take in life," said Mr. Nickle to the children, in his closing remarks. "Press forward towards that goal and do not allow anything to stand in your way."

The meeting closed with the National Anthem, after which Mr. J. G. Elliott called for three cheers and a "Tiger" for the Lieutenant-Governor and they were given with great enthusiasm.

Brockville People Married.

At St. Luke's Church, Ottawa, on Sept. 4th, Miss Eileen Rowan Baker, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. A. Baker, 107 Spadina avenue, Ottawa, was married to James Ford Dixon, son of James Dixon, Brockville.

At Toronto, on Sept. 4th, Agnes Macintosh, Brockville daughter of the late James Macintosh, of Glenora, Scotland, and George Saunders, Toronto, formerly of Brockville, were married.

Were Badly Injured.

Mrs. James Heffernan, formerly of Brockville, riding in an automobile at Oswego, N.Y., which skidded on a slippery pavement and overturned, with the result that Mrs. Heffernan sustained a fracture of the spine. Mrs. Heffernan is a native of Killen and is well known throughout the district.

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