

## WAR PENSIONS LEGISLATION.

During the year the war-pensions legislation inaugurated in 1915 and amended in 1916 was further amended by a comprehensive measure the varied provisions of which, taking effect as from the 1st January, 1918, brought about as an immediate result an increase in the annual appropriation for war pensions of a sum exceeding £70,000 per annum. Chief among these provisions were—

- (1.) An increase for all ranks of 5s. weekly in respect of total-disability pensions, associated with which is the increase of all pensions payable to wives of totally disabled soldiers to one-half of that payable to the soldier for total disablement.
- (2.) An increase of 5s. weekly for all ranks to widows of soldiers.
- (3.) A further increase of 10s. weekly for all ranks to widows with children of the pension age.
- (4.) An increase of 2s. 6d. weekly in respect of children's pensions, whether on account of total disablement or death.
- (5.) An increase in the pensions payable to widowed mothers of soldiers.
- (6.) Supplementary pensions up to £1 weekly to disabled soldiers where earning-capacity precludes the enjoyment of pre-war standard of living.
- (7.) Supplementary pensions up to 15s. weekly to widows in certain cases.
- (8.) An increase to £1 weekly in the amount payable for an attendant to a disabled soldier.
- (9.) The enactment of a schedule of minimum pensions for specific injuries.
- (10.) Extension of period after discharge to two years during which marriages may be recognized for disability pensions.
- (11.) Power to increase Imperial pensions to New Zealand rates in cases of Imperial Reservists mobilized in New Zealand, and of enlistments in New Zealand.

It is possible under these provisions for a private soldier whose pre-war earnings reached £5 a week, and his wife, to receive such an amount by way of pension, and there is at present on record a case being paid by the Department as follows :—

						£	s.	d.
Total disability pension to soldier	..	..	..	..	(per week)	2	0	0
Total disability pension to wife	..	..	..	..	„	1	0	0
Pension for attendant	..	..	..	..	„	1	0	0
Supplementary pension	..	..	..	..	„	1	0	0
Total	..	..	..	..	„	£5	0	0

## WAR PENSIONS BOARD.

Owing to the greatly increased number of pensions claims arising from the heavy casualty lists and the more numerous drafts of returned men, the work of the War Pensions Board has become much more strenuous, the pressure being relieved towards the close of the year by the appointment, under last year's legislation, of a new member in the person of a representative of the Returned Soldiers' Association, and of a deputy to act in the absence of any member of the Board. (Since the close of the year the appointment of two additional deputies has become a necessity.)

The policy laid down by the Board of obtaining first-hand information regarding the disabilities of soldiers has been followed throughout the year, and visits were paid to the chief centres of population in both Islands. To meet complaints regarding the delay in dealing with original claims from soldiers, two or three thousand of whom landed at one period of the year within a week, the Board instituted a system whereby the Department was authorized, immediately on receipt of a claim from a soldier whose medical papers showed that his earning-capacity was affected by a war disability, to pay a flat-rate allowance of £1 10s. a week pending the Board's decision being obtained. By this means it has been possible to have in the hands of the soldier, not later than the date of his discharge from the Forces, a provisional certificate entitling him to collect an initial instalment of £6 10s. on the 23rd day of the month in which he is discharged. One advantage of this provisional grant to the soldier is that if the pension eventually granted by the Board is greater the balance is made up, and if the grant is less no rebate is asked for.

## FINANCE ACT, 1917.

Under this Act, which received the Governor-General's assent on the 15th September, 1917, increases were provided for the period of the war and twelve months thereafter, to meet the cost of living, in regard to the pensions payable under the Pensions Act of 1913 and the Miners' Phthisis Act of 1915, as follows :—

- (1.) On account of old-age pensions—5s. a week additional, making the total pension £39 per annum.
- (2.) On account of widows' pensions—£6 per annum additional for each child, making the maximum for each child £12 per annum.
- (3.) On account of military pensions—5s. a week additional where income does not exceed £200 per annum, making total pension £49 per annum.
- (4.) On account of miners' pensions—5s. a week additional all round, except when increase already available on account of receipt of old-age pension or widow's pension.

These increases commenced with instalments payable on the 23rd September, and of the estimated annual cost of the concessions—namely, £300,000—some £164,000 was paid during the remaining six and a half months of the year. The annual value of these concessions payable at the close of the year was £303,000.