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THE NEW ZEALAND RETURNED SOLDIERS' ASSOCIATION.

PARLIAMENTARY NOTES.

1.—To ask the Minister of Railways whether the Railway Department will immediately give effect to his promise that railwaymen who joined the N.Z.E.F. and have returned will be fully reinstated without loss of pay or seniority. Note.—I can mention three cases in which this promise has not been fulfilled, and whose superannuation will be affected as a consequence. The cases are as follows:—

No. 5/398a. Prior to the war, this man was employed as a surfaceman on the permanent staff, but since his return, has been employed as a crossing-keeper at £3 per week, working 60 hours per week, with 2½ hours each day broken. This involves a period of 12½ hours away from his home. He has had 4½ years service with the N.Z.E.F., and contracted heart trouble whilst overseas, which makes it impossible for him to return to his pre-war employment as surfaceman.

No. 51340. This man was wounded on active service and is therefore unable to carry on his pre-war occupation of porter with the Railway Department. The Department therefore, has given him light employment as crossing-keeper at a wage of 10s per day. Other casual crossing-keepers doing the same work are paid at the rate of 12s 6d per day.

No. 12975. This man had three years' active service and received a gunshot wound through the knee which makes it impossible for him to continue his pre-war employment as porter. He is now employed as a crossing-keeper at a weekly wage of £3, for which he has to work 60 hours per week, with 20 hours broken time. This man, however, could undertake work as a signalman, as he has had previous experience of this work, being employed as a relieving signalman at Pukerua, for a period of 6 months before the war.—(Mr McCombs, M.P.).

Reply.—The Right-Hon. Mr Massey replied that the Department had already given the fullest effect to the promise made to the railwaymen who joined the N.Z.E.F., and as far as possible, men had been suitably placed. 5/398 was medically unfit, and was placed in the only position which, in his condition of health he could satisfactorily carry out. The same remark applied to No. 51340 and No. 12975. In each case the men were in receipt of the classification rate of pay for the positions they held. Arrangements had been made to have them re-examined by the Railway Medical Officer with a view of seeing whether they had yet recovered sufficiently to make it safe to place them in other positions in the service.

2.—To ask the Minister of Defence whether it is the intention or is it possible for the Government to have prepared in book form a total list of the names of those who served overseas during the late war, and what town or district they enlisted in or were called up from; also complete lists of those killed or wounded, and where or how such men were killed or wounded.—(Mr McLeod, M.P.).

Reply.—The Hon. Sir R. H. Rhodes replied that the matter of preparation in book form of the details outlined by the Hon. Member for Wairarapa had been considered by the Government and in view of the high cost of the compilation and publication, it had been decided that the Government would not be justified at the present time in incurring the required expenditure.

3.—To ask the Minister of Defence when the volume entitled "The New Zealanders in France" by Col. H. Stewart, C.M.G., will be available.—(Mr Seddon, M.P.).

Reply.—The Hon. Minister of Defence replied that the volume in question was in the hands of the printer, and was all in type. The greater portion of the proofs had been revised, and it was hoped that the issue of the work would not be long delayed.

1.—To ask the Minister in Charge of Pensions whether he will introduce legislation to make it possible for persons benefitting by Trade Union Superannuation Funds to draw the full amount of the Old Age Pension. Note.—Aged members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers who participate in the Society's Superannuation Fund, the benefit of which range from 7s to 10s per week, are debarred from receiving the full amount of the Old Age Pension, where their income exceeds £60 in the case of single men, and £100 in the case of married men.—(Mr Holland, M.P.).

Reply.—The Hon. Sir W. Herries replied that it was not possible to provide that all superannuation benefits should be exempt as income for old age pension purposes. The amending Pension Bill to be

introduced this session would, however, provide for an increase in the disqualifying amount of income both for single and married applicants.

2.—To ask the Minister of Customs (1) Whether he is aware that a number of Germans arrived per the s.s. Niagara on Monday last, with the object of settling in Taranaki. (2) Whether it is true that these men did not travel as Germans, but as natives of Switzerland. (3) Whether these men are regarded as undesirable immigrants; and if so, what steps were taken to prevent them from landing in New Zealand.—(Mr Wright, M.P.).

Reply.—The Hon. Sir W. Herries (Minister of Customs) replied, "I am not aware that any Germans arrived per the s.s. Niagara with the object of settling in Taranaki, and if the Hon. Member can produce proof of his statements, any Germans who have unlawfully landed in New Zealand will be deported."

3.—To ask the Minister of Lands (1) Whether he has seen the statement made by Mr E. Earle Vaile, appearing in the "Auckland Herald" of the 10th August, which contains charges against the Lands Department as follows:—(a) That the Department was entitled to take possession of the Reparoa Estate at the end of January, 1920, and that leases were renewed because the State was not ready to proceed with subdivision; (b) that the acquiring of Maori leases was no bar to the opening up of the Reparoa Estate, as the leases were such that soldiers were quite prepared to take over the leases and allow the freehold to stand in abeyance until satisfactory arrangements can be made with the Natives; (c) the Lands Department is charged with procrastination. (2) Whether in view of the foregoing charges, against the Lands Department, contained in Mr Vaile's statement, and the injustice inflicted upon the Auckland Province by the Department's inexcusable loss of time, in opening up the Reparoa Estate he will grant a public enquiry into the Department's administration in connection with this Estate.—(Mr Parry, M.P.).

Reply.—The Hon. Mr Guthrie replied: (1) That the Lands Department was entitled to take possession of Messrs Stead and Watt's interest in the estate on the 1st February, 1920. It was, however, incorrect to say that the leases were renewed because the State was not ready to proceed with the sub-division. The Crown was not ready to proceed with the settlement of all of the sections because numbers of them consisted of partly Native leaseholds and part Crown Land.

It was necessary to consolidate or purchase the Native interest before settling soldiers because: (a) no satisfactory title could be given until this was done. (b) No price could be fixed for sale to soldiers until it was known how much had to be paid for the fee simple. (c) It would have increased the price asked by the Native owners for the fee simple had the Crown entered into binding agreements to sell prior to negotiating and, (d) a large area of the estate had also to be drained before it could be occupied by soldiers and this work and the roading had proceeded as fast as possible. This cost had also to be added to the sections before they could be disposed of. For the reasons given, the acquisition of the fee simple of the Native leases is necessary to the proper subdivision before selling to soldiers. Mr Vaile's experience had probably been obtained from dealings in which the problems surrounding the soldier settlement in small holdings did not require to be studied. Neither the Crown or the Auckland Province had suffered any loss by the delay. In fact, it was a moot point whether with land of this class the interests of all parties particularly of soldiers would not be better served by waiting until the drainage was completed, and the drained land consolidated. (2) No enquiry was necessary and he might say that adjustments such as those fermented about Reparoa did more to hinder a good settlement than to help it.

4.—To ask the Postmaster-General whether he will so alter the postage on a newspaper as to bring it back to not greater than a half-penny; and to make up the deficiency caused by the foregoing by increasing the stamp duty on a sliding scale, namely from £2, to £25, 2d; £25 to £50, 2½d; £50 to £100, 3d; and so on, charging 3d extra for every £100 or fraction of £100.—Note: The effect of the increase of postage is to penalise backblock settlers, making them pay 50 per cent. increase on the cost of a paper, as against the city dweller.—(Mr Edie, M.P.).

Reply.—The Hon. Mr Coates, replied, that so far as the Post Office is concerned, the reduction of the newspaper postage from 1d to ½d could not be recommended. It was not found practicable to exempt newspapers from the general increase in postage charges.

5.—To ask the Minister of Mines whether he will this session consider the urgent need for increasing the subsidy given to mining prospectors. Note.—The present subsidy is quite inadequate in view of the greatly increased cost of provisions and mining equipment.—(Mr Atmore M.P.).

Reply.—The Right-Hon. Mr Massey replied that the Government had also recognised that the subsidy payable to prospectors was inadequate, and as already announced in the Financial Budget steps had been taken with a view to increasing such subsidy. It was expected that amending regulations increasing the subsidy by 30 per cent. would appear in next week's "Gazette."

6.—To ask the Minister of Immigration whether he will give an undertaking that facilities will be provided for bringing from England the wives of men who are already here, on terms not less favourable than the terms granted to immigrants; and if he will give instructions that the wives referred to be given priority over other immigrants when passages are booked.—(Mr Holland, M.P.).

Reply.—The Hon. Mr Nosworthy, replied, that under the present nomination system, (men who were already in New Zealand might nominate their wives and families for an assisted passage, and they would receive the same concessions as any other nominated immigrant. The method of booking passages is, that applications were taken in rotation, and it was not considered advisable to depart from that practice.

1.—To ask the Minister of Railways what steps he proposes to take to remove the gross injustice inflicted on members of the railway service by reason of their being superseded in position, while absent from New Zealand as members of the N.Z.E.F. (Mr S. G. Smith, M.P.).

Reply.—The Right-Hon. Mr Massey replied that as far as could be ascertained the only members of the Railway Service who had been superseded were those who had returned from the front suffering from injuries which had prevented them taking up the occupations they previously followed. In such cases as these the Department had gone to a very great amount of trouble to find suitable work for the men. If the Hon. Member would furnish the names of the persons to whom he referred, he (the Minister of Railways) should be glad to have the cases investigated.

2.—To ask the Government whether some small increase even if only a pound a month could not while the cost of living is so high be granted to the small and fast diminishing number of Maori War Veterans many of whom are very old and crippled, and are struggling to exist on pensions of £4 1s 8d a month.—(Mr Field, M.P.).

Reply.—The Hon. Sir W. Herries replied that the question of raising the pension payable to Maori War Veterans would be considered in connection with the amendment to the Pensions Act proposed this session.

3.—To ask the Government whether they intend to introduce legislation this session to provide for the extension of the benefits under the D.S.S. Act, and the Repatriation Act to the New Zealand survivors of the South African War, now resident in the Dominion.—(Mr Young, M.P.).

Reply.—The Hon. Mr Guthrie replied that when the claims of most of the discharged soldiers who had served during the recent war had been dealt with the question would be considered of extending to surviving veterans of the South African War resident in the Dominion the benefits obtainable under the D.S.S. Act, and the Repatriation Act.

4.—To ask the Minister of Industries and Commerce (1) whether it is correct as reported that the Government landed galvanised roofing iron at £45 per ton, whilst merchants were selling it at £73 per ton—a difference of £28 per ton; and whether he does not consider that it is profiteering of the worst kind. (2) Whether the Government will bring the matter before the Board of Trade with a view to prosecution of the offenders.—(Mr Witty, M.P.).

Reply.—The Hon. Mr Lee replied: (1) That it was correct that roofing iron for Workers' Dwellings had been landed recently at £43 per ton. The difference between the price stated and the price at which merchants were selling at the time the iron was landed, was due partly to the purchase having been made when the market price was low, the prices rising again since the orders had been placed by the Department, and partly to the Department's importing direct in large quantities and thus eliminating some of the merchants' charges. (2) That the Board of Trade was enquiring into the matter, but

the information received did not disclose that the merchants were charging excessive prices.

5.—To ask the Government whether in addition to the provision made for the National Memorial they will consider allocating a sum for the purpose of assisting by way of subsidy the efforts being made in the three chief centres outside of Wellington to provide memorials.—(Mr Sullivan, M.P.).

Reply.—The Hon. Mr Anderson replied that it had been decided by the Government that no subsidy should be granted towards the erection of any War Memorial outside the National War Memorial.

6.—To ask the Minister of Defence whether it is a fact that the Defence Department is calling for open tenders for buildings in the Featherston and other camps in the Wairarapa district, while at the same time returned soldiers settled in the neighbourhood have unsuccessfully approached the Department to secure the same buildings at a fair price.—(Mr McLeod, M.P.).

Reply.—The Hon. Sir R. Rhodes replied that the Defence Department was not calling tenders, but it had been arranged that the Public Works Department should take in hand the distribution of these buildings to other departments which were urgently in need of them.

7.—To ask the Minister of Defence whether the Government intend to erect or contribute towards the cost of the erection of tombstones on the graves of soldiers who died on return to the Dominion.—(Mr Seddon, M.P.).

Reply.—The Hon. Sir R. Rhodes replied that the Government was prepared to erect headstones similar to those approved by the Imperial War Graves Commission on the graves of all soldiers who returned to the Dominion and died as a result of disabilities incurred on Active Service irrespective of where they were buried, provided death occurred within twelve months of discharge.

8.—To ask the Minister of Defence whether he will refer to the Defence Committee for consideration and report to the Government the question of the position of men whose claim to the Imperial Long Service Pension is based on service partly with the Imperial Forces and partly with the N.Z.E.F. with a view to seeing if provision could be made so that such combined service shall count and entitle the applicant to a pension on terms satisfactory to the Imperial Government and the N.Z. Government.—(Mr W. D. Stewart, M.P.).

Reply.—The Hon. Sir R. H. Rhodes replied that application had already been made to the Imperial Authorities asking of those ex-service Imperial N.C.O.'s and men who served with the New Zealand Forces could receive the same concession as regards increased pension for War Service as those ex-Imperial men who re-joined the Imperial Forces for the war. The reply from the Imperial Government was that they would not accept any responsibility for men other than those who actually served and received pay from the Imperial Forces during the war. The New Zealand Government was investigating the matter to ascertain how many were affected and would then further consider the question.

9.—To ask the Government whether they will this session bring in a Bill to prevent Insurance Companies from exploiting the public. More especially with regard to the insurance of infants.—(Mr Witty, M.P.).

Reply.—The Hon. Mr Coates replied that a Bill was now being prepared dealing with the question of industrial insurance. The Bill would deal with the question of children's insurance and provide such safeguards as might be necessary.

THE GREAT CHANGE.

When they shipped me home from Brody
With some shrapnel in my chest
And a bayonet-wound a-biting at my leg
I was feted, I was dined.
I was motor-car'd and wined,
Any they said, "Here's looking at you,
good old egg."

But it ain't the same to-day,
As I pass I hear them say,
"There goes that dirty traitor, damn his
soul."

You see I'm striking now
And they're kicking up a row
'Cause I'm holding up the profits on
their coal.

It sure is very strange
When you figure out the change
Since the time when I came back from
oversea.

I'd been feeling all along
There was something mighty wrong
But, by God, I never dreamt that it was
me.

Ex-Sergeant, M.C., U.S.A.