

R.S.A. CLAIM 10.—*That the seven-year limit in subsection (2) of section 3 of the 1915 Act should be abolished.*

This provision limits the pension rights of a wife and children to cases where the soldier dies from war injuries or disease within seven years after war injuries received or disease contracted. This is an arbitrary limitation, and no reason has been shown why it should be maintained. The abolition has the approval of the Director-General of Medical Services, and we recommend accordingly.

GENERAL.

Throughout the foregoing report our recommendations with regard to pensions deal only with the lowest grade—that of Private. In the cases of the higher grades we recommend that the benefit of the economic pension be given in cases where the existing compensation pension does not amount to the total of the compensation and economic pensions now recommended in the case of the lowest grade: *e.g.*, a sergeant-major's widow with one child is entitled to a compensation pension of £2 4s. a week and 10s. a week for the child: she would accordingly, if she has no other income, be entitled to an economic pension of 6s. a week—total, £3: the position of the private's widow being—compensation pension, £2; child's pension, 10s.; economic pension, 10s.: total, £3.

The subject of the medical treatment of ex-members of the Forces calls for consideration. The present position is set out in the following minute by the Director-General of Medical Services:—

With reference to the subject of medical treatment of ex-members of the N.Z.E.F. for disabilities due to or aggravated by their service:—

1. The authority for this treatment is contained in paragraph 106 (i) of Demobilization Instructions, which reads as follows: "The Defence Department will provide medical treatment for discharged soldiers who are suffering from a recurrence of illness arising out of and directly caused by their service in the Forces, such as the reopening of a wound, muscular rheumatism, neurasthenia, pneumonia, or any other ailment which renders them unfit to follow their daily avocations.

This instruction is defective to the extent that it suggests that only disabilities which render men unfit to follow their daily avocations should be treated. This is obviously not the intention of the instruction, and, of course, that limitation has not been recognized in practice.

2. The War Pensions Act of 1915 stated that war pensions would be granted to ex-members of the N.Z.E.F. whose disabilities arose out of their service. The War Pensions Amendment Act, 1917, cancelled that section, and provided that pensions would be granted apparently for any disabilities arising on service. It will be seen, therefore, that war pensions and medical treatment for disabilities arising on service were not granted under the same conditions, in so far that a group of disabilities which arose on service but were not due to or aggravated by service were pensionable, but not eligible for treatment. In order to overcome this anomaly, a General Headquarters Instruction was drafted, giving authority to the Director-General of Medical Services to give treatment in other cases at his discretion. The object of this General Headquarters Instruction was to cover the group of cases to which I refer.

3. As formerly medical treatment was granted by the Defence Department and war pensions by the War Pensions Board, in the early stages it frequently happened that the Defence Department granted treatment to men whom the Pensions Board would not pension, and *vice versa*. This anomaly was overcome by conferences between the Director-General of Medical Services and the War Pensions Board in doubtful cases, so that by the goodwill of these Departments this anomaly was removed. This procedure was adopted a little more than two years ago. Since the 1st July of this year [1922] the treatment and pensioning of ex-soldiers are carried out by the Pensions Department, the Director-General of Medical Services being in charge of the medical arrangements of the latter Department. The liaison between treatment and pension is now complete, and the position now quite satisfactory.

4. The authorities for treatment, however, remain, as described in the opening paragraphs of this letter, in a somewhat unsatisfactory position, and I suggest that if any amending legislation is to be introduced with reference to the War Pensions Acts that it should be set out that medical treatment will be granted to ex-members of the N.Z.E.F. for disabilities which would render them eligible for granting of a war pension. Medical treatment should be specified to include the provision of surgical appliances, and such other arrangements as I suggest might be set out as regulations under the Act. These regulations would include the supply of artificial limbs, other surgical appliances, artificial eyes, the provision of accommodation to T.B. patients on discharge from sanatoria, and other apparatus, &c., as is already approved by different orders and regulations at present in existence.