

## UNCLE SAM TAKING GREAT PAINS TO PUT VOCATIONALLY DISABLED MEN IN NEW JOBS

More Liberal Law Needed to Come up to Provisions Made for Men by Canadian Government.

WASHINGTON, D. C.—Working to overcome the handicaps of men injured in the war, the federal government is making giant strides to place the vocationally disabled soldier back in the economic ranks of the country, able to compete with other "whole" men and to earn an independent income for himself. The plan of the Federal Board for Vocational Education, which has this work in hand, is a broad one, and though no actual figures are yet available it is likely that as many as 50,000 men who served in the war will have to be re-educated either vocationally or occupationally.

Under this plan the federal board is now working on what is practically a four-year program though appropriations so far have been made only up to July 1920. In another month, it is estimated 17,000 men will be approved to go into immediate training with the opening for the fall terms of the professional and technical schools of the country. The forty or fifty thousand men disabled in the service of the country, will all be placed in training for various lines of activity

and nearly all of them will have completed work for vocational and occupational rehabilitation by the summer of 1923. By far the majority of the men to be rehabilitated will have finished their retraining within a year or two years, some of them in less than six months, and will be back on their feet in that time in professional and industrial ranks.

So far no provision has been made by congress for rehabilitating men whose disabilities do not amount to a vocational or occupational handicap. It is believed possible here by those best informed on reconstruction legislation that congress may yet be asked to provide some means of compensatory training as well as the compensation they already paid through the war risk bureau to men who have simply suffered physical disabilities, without economic loss to them, in their country's service. To carry out such a program, it is estimated the federal government would have to expend upwards of a half-billion dollars.

To date, the vocational education board has got in touch with some

125,000 men and has actually surveyed and interviewed 110,135 soldiers, sailors and marines injured in service during the war. The majority of these will not be able to obtain retraining under the act of congress as it now stands even with recent amendments. All of the men more than 10 per cent disabled will receive money compensation to the extent to which they are disabled, but only those whose disabilities mean a handicap to them in the occupation or vocation they followed or in ordinary lines of work can be re-trained and fitted for a new trade or profession. Of those already interviewed, 14,876 have been approved for training and 7256 of these have actually been placed in training. Several thousand additional men will have been approved by October, and these, with the men now waiting, will begin their schooling when the schools re-open.

According to recent figures reported to the bureau of war risk insurance by the army 149,433 men have been discharged from service with a disability.

"Only cases showing 10 per cent disability have been reported," the report states. "At this rate it seems probable that the total number of cases of disability resulting from the war and entitled to (monetary) compensation will be close to 290,000."

Thus far Canada has been the most liberal of other countries in granting re-training to its soldiers, but figuring on twice the percentage allowed by Canada, and allowing an additional 50,000 disabled men from among

the sailors and marines, it is possible that not more than 20 per cent of the men disabled, or something less than 50,000 men will be eligible for vocational and industrial rehabilitation.

To keep within the written law it is necessary that certain evidence be gathered from the military records and that the men to be approved be physically examined. The board is making the most liberal possible interpretation of all cases coming before it in many cases that do not actually come within the law, but where the board believes something ought to be done, it has used special funds given it by patriotic organizations. A large revolving fund given by the Elks fraternal organization has been largely used in ministering to such cases.

A central case board has been established here to finally approve all cases sent in by district boards. This system is necessary because the board operating under a budget system of expense from congress. This board reviews on an average of 1,000 cases a day. The majority of these have to be rejected, though if any more liberal laws should be passed by congress in the future these cases would be re-opened and it is supposed the majority of them would then be approved. The documents and evidence in the case, of course, are carefully preserved, so that the expense of securing them again will be minimized.

Should a more liberal law be passed opening up possibilities for training for such a group of men it is now estimated it would take at least \$350,000,000 to pay the support, tuition and text book cost alone. Further provision would have to be made for traveling expenses of the men, medical attention and mechanical appliances for equipment and administration of the broader law. At present the board is paying the tuition, traveling expenses, text book cost and other special expenses for the men it approves, in addition to paying \$100 to men with dependents and \$50 a month to men without dependents and family allowances to the former class.

The work of the board in reviewing an application for re-training consists in finding out the legitimacy of the claim, the particular manner in which the disability handicaps him, the vocation or occupation he has formerly followed, and then it decides with him on what would be the best lines of work for the man still in service that new work to follow based on his particular aptitude, his wishes, what he is able to do with his new disabilities and the remunerative promise of the classes of work open to him. But in doing this it runs into many obstacles such as missing discharge papers and lot medical records that would show the disability originated in service. The board must have the man examined to find out the character of the disability and many of the men are hard to get into touch with after discharge.

There are other difficulties that arise, but on the whole the cooperation between the board and the men

to date has been gratifying. It is in fact a little forethought on their part in formation will greatly reduce the time it takes to deal with their cases.



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