

THE REPATRIATION ACT.

Need for Amendments.

Scheme of Mr. Markowicz.

Mr. A. J. de Topor-Markowicz, formerly organiser for the War Loan, has issued the following statement, which has been approved by the Repatriation Act Amendment Committee, representing the R.S.S.I.L.A., the Rejected Volunteers' Association, the R.S. and Citizens' Political Federation, and the Queensland Loyalty League:

Repatriation is supposed to be for our soldiers and their dependents, yet the Act and the regulations thereunder deny the soldier even the right of representation.

The Repatriation Act and the regulations thereunder provide for five representative, or, rather, partially representative, bodies in charge of the administration of repatriation, yet not one of them provides any representation for those in whose interest the Act is supposed to have been framed. True, there are to be two returned men on the Repatriation Commission and the Repatriation State Boards; two men out of seven, but these men are nominees of the Minister or Governor-General, not representatives of returned soldiers.

On the remaining three bodies there is no room for returned men. The Chamber of Manufactures, the employers, the Trades and Labor Council, the unions, even men who in the past proved themselves to be directly opposed to those who did their duty to their country, they all have the right to representation; all, all, barring the men whose interests, whose very existence is directly depended upon the Act and its administration. Why?

Act and its administration. Why? Bewildered we ask: Is the country afraid that the returned men may ask for justice and equality?" There has been a lot of talk of preference to returned men. Is this the preference? No preference we are asking for, but justice, plain, unvarnished justice! After the South African War many advertisements for employees bore the legend beneath: "No South African veterans need apply." Is this going to find an echo to-day? Is the slogan, "No returned soldier need apply" to remain the motto of the Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act?

The most cruel irony of war is the fact that those who fought to overthrow tyranny and autocracy are the only ones to be subjected to an autocratic rule in Australia; but those who

fought for the rights of democracy are denied the right of democratic institutions, even where their own welfare is concerned. For long decades we fought to win to ourselves the various powers vested with the governors; to-day we voluntarily assign our democratic rights back to where we won them from!

The individual, the Governor or the Minister may be the best man for the purpose, but he may be succeeded by one who is not. Where shall we be then? We are fighting for the principle of democracy versus autocracy!

It is no secret that up to the present repatriation gave but scant satisfaction. We consider that the root of the evil lies in the Act itself. The Act is an autocratic anomaly in a democratic community. It is out of touch with the soldier, his dependents and the public. It cannot work, and it will clog the machinery of the repatriation until amended.

After long and careful consideration

After long and careful consideration we decided to acquaint the people of Australia with the facts and our demands, and are confident that the country and the authorities will recognise the wrong done to the soldier in the past, and that justice will be meted out to us.

Hereunder are the sections of the Act and regulations thereunder, and the alterations required:—

Appointment of Commissioners.

The Act and Regulations as they are at present:—

- 7.—(1) The Minister shall be one of the Commissioners, and shall, by virtue of his office, be the Chairman of the Commission.
- (2) The Governor-General shall, as soon as conveniently practicable, appoint six other persons to be Commissioners, two of whom shall be returned soldiers or sailors.
- (3) A Commissioner shall hold office during the pleasure of the Governor-General.

Required alterations:—

- (1) 3 members to be appointed by the Governor-General in Council.
3 members to be elected by the R.S.S.I.L.A.
The Minister to be the Chairman.
- (2) A Commissioner shall hold office during the pleasure of the Governor-General in Council for a period not exceeding three years, after which he will be eligible for re-election.

State Board.

The Act and Regulations as they are at present:—

- 10.—(1) The Governor-General shall, as soon as conveniently practicable, appoint in each State seven persons, two of whom shall be returned soldiers or sailors, to be

turned soldiers or sailors, to be members of the State Board for that State.

- (2) The Governor-General shall appoint one of the members of a State Board to be Chairman of the State Board.
- (4) A member of the State Board shall hold office during the pleasure of the Governor-General.

Required alterations:—

- (1) 3 members to be appointed by the Governor-General in Council.
3 members to be elected by the R.S.S.I.L.A.
The Chairman to be appointed by the Department of Repatriation.
- (2) A member of the State Board shall hold office during the pleasure of the Governor-General in Council for a period not exceeding three years, after which he will be eligible for re-election.

Regulations Under the Act to be Embodied in the Act.

Personnel of Local Committees.

The Act and Regulations as they are at present:—

24. Each Local Committee shall have an executive of seven members, of whom five shall be elected by the Committee, and two shall be nominated by the Minister.

Required alterations:—

- 3 members to be elected by the Local Committee.
- 2 members to be elected by the R.S.S.I.L.A.
- 2 members to be appointed by the Department of Repatriation.

Constitution of State Industrial Committees.

The Act and Regulations as they are at present:—

29. A Soldiers' State Industrial Committee shall be formed by the Department in the metropolis of each State, and shall consist of a Chair-

man, to be appointed by the Minister, three nominees of the Chamber of Manufactures for the State, and three nominees of the Trades and Labor Council.

Required alterations:—

2 members to be elected by the Chamber of Manufactures.

2 members to be elected by the Trades and Labor Council.

2 members to be elected by the R.S.S.I.L.A.

Chairman to be appointed by the Minister.

Constitution of District Industrial Committee.

The Act and Regulations as they are at present:—

30 A Soldier's District industrial Committee shall be formed as directed by the Minister, and shall consist of a Chairman, to be appointed by the Minister, and two representatives of the employers in the trade of the trainee, and two representatives of the Union covering the trade or calling of the trainee.

Required alterations:—

2 members to be elected by the employers in the trade of the trainee.

2 members to be elected by the union covering the trade or calling of the trainee.

2 members to be elected by the R.S.S.I.L.A.

Chairman to be appointed by the Minister.

Further Additions to the Act Required.

1. Department of Repatriation to be removed from political influence, say on lines under which the Auditor-General works.

2. Members of Commission and State Boards to be paid servants of the country, the amount of remuneration to be determined by the Government.

3. No person or persons deriving

3. No person or persons deriving any benefit in connection with the Repatriation, as commission or land agents, or in any other capacity, shall be eligible to hold any office on the commission, State boards, local committees, State industrial boards, district industrial committees, or any office whatsoever under the Repatriation Act or regulation thereunder.

4. Regulations under the Act must be approved by the commission before they can become effective.