

Spaul Pensions

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Pension

A sidelight is thrown on all these questions by an examination of the last report of Henry Clay Evans as Commissioner of Pensions for the year ending June 30, 1901. The dishonesty of those who are seeking to obtain assistance from the government on fraudulent grounds is astounding and the aid given to such claimants by unworthy pension agents is atrocious.

Mr. Evans says:

"The pension item has become one of the largest in the financial budget. The generosity of the American people to the soldiers and sailors and their dependents knows no limit, but the officers of the Government, the people's servants, should not permit that generosity to be abused. . . .

The fault is not with the soldier claimant or his widow, but the system devised for ascertaining their rights is so faulty that it offers a most inviting field for the enterprising and adventurous claim agent or attorney. It holds out an inducement to those that may be persuaded to file false claims or fraudulent evidence in support of valid ones. In fact the system aids and encourages fraudulent practices of various sorts. . . . In my opinion there can be, under these circumstances, no security to the Government against dishonest claims, and probably the proportion of such claims which will be successfully prosecuted will increase rather than diminish, the dishonest attorneys becoming more skilled and the temptation to frauds becoming greater as the average value of pension is en-

hanced by the accumulation of arrears and growing liberality of legislation. Their insatiable greed and detestation of all regulations made to insure honesty and restrain fraud, shamelessly proclaimed, has done much to lower the regard which would otherwise be universally manifested for the deserving soldiers.

"The medical examination is the basis of pension- it determines the disability. The same system of securing medical examiners prevails now as thirty-five years ago, and has prevailed. They are frequently changed. They know nothing about the pension laws and are not expected to. They are subjected to no test examination as to their medical skill, and never have been. The system was wrong then, and was known to be wrong."