

LEGISLATIVE, EXECUTIVE AND JUDICIAL APPROPRIATION BILL.

FEBRUARY 21, 1887.—Committed to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed.

Mr. HOLMAN, from the Committee on Appropriations, submitted the following

SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT:

[To accompany bill H. R. 11028.]

The Committee on Appropriations submit the following as part 3 of the report presented to the House on the 3d instant, accompanying the bill making appropriations for legislative, executive and judicial expenses for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1888, being statements made by the Commissioner of Pensions, Adjutant-General, and Third Auditor, in connection with the estimate submitted in House Ex. Doc. No. 109 for 221 additional clerks in the Pension Bureau.

PROPOSED INCREASE IN CLERICAL FORCE OF PENSION BUREAU.

WASHINGTON, D. C., February 19, 1887.

The Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations having under consideration estimates of the Secretary of the Interior for an appropriation to meet the expenditures under the Mexican pension act, had before them to-day General John C. Black, Commissioner of Pensions, to explain the necessity for an increase of the clerical force in his office to carry out the provisions of that bill. Col. John S. Williams, Third Auditor of the Treasury, and Adjutant-General Drum also appeared before the committee.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL JOHN C. BLACK.

Mr. CANNON. General, in your letter of January 22, 1887, to the Secretary of the Interior, at the close of your letter you use this language:

"To dispose of the work in question, created by said Mexican bill, by the 30th of June, will require an additional clerical force of 1 assistant chief of division, at a salary of \$1,800; 15 section chiefs to be clerks of class 2, at a salary of \$1,400; 150 clerks of class 1, at a salary of \$1,200; 15 record clerks of the \$1,000 class; 35 clerks of the \$1,000 class; and five messengers; making an aggregate increase in the force of 221 employes, and an aggregate annual addition to the pay-roll of this Bureau of \$257,000."

General BLACK. That is the letter I wrote a month ago.

Mr. CANNON. That contemplates the settlement of all these cases during this year; between this and the 30th of June?

General BLACK. Yes, sir.

Mr. CANNON. So that you intended if the appropriation was given to have your force appointed promptly, so that it can be at once employed in this work and then dispose of it by the 1st of July next, 1887?

General BLACK. Yes, sir.

Mr. TOWNSHEND. Do you contemplate by your inquiry that the force can be discharged on the 1st of next July?

Mr. CANNON. I so understand it.

General BLACK. I think I shall be able to dispose of that force substantially by the end of June.

Mr. CANNON. This coming June?

General BLACK. This coming June.

Mr. CANNON. You contemplate the employment of necessarily unskilled people only?

General BLACK. No, sir; not necessarily unskilled. We have upon the files of the Office and in my files a great number of applications from people who, while they have had, many of them, no experience in the departmental work of the Pension Office, are, nevertheless, people that are skilled in clerical matters. We have also statements that lead me to believe that a large number of people have been certified or have been passed as eligible for departmental positions by the Civil Service Commission, and they are in the same category with the others of whom I have heretofore spoken. While not having skill in this class of work or in this particular line of business, they are competent people, and could readily adapt themselves to the discharge of these duties.

Mr. CANNON. Is there any considerable number of them, so far as you are informed, that have had experience in the Pension Office?

General BLACK. Not any great number.

Mr. CANNON. How long after he is appointed does it take a man of ordinary skill in clerical duties before he becomes a reliable clerk?

General BLACK. That is a question, Mr. Cannon, that I cannot possibly answer. It would vary with each individual case almost. In the way in which I am organizing this Mexican business we do not think that we would want an ordinarily competent man to take more than two weeks to get into the routine of the work. If you will notice the requisition which you have just read, it provides substantially for one hundred and fifty desk clerks—people who are ready to receive these papers from the chief of division, to brief them, and prepare them for admission or rejection. It then provides for fifteen section chiefs, one to be in charge of each group of ten clerks, who would advise and pass upon the work of their subordinates; and then the whole section itself to be under the charge of an assistant chief. This is strictly a clerical desk-working, case-handling force. There are asked for, in addition to that, for the miscellaneous character of work which will necessarily accompany so large a business, thirty-five clerks, people who will answer the miscellaneous inquiries (and they will be very numerous, indeed), and fifteen record clerks, to keep records of the business; but the working force upon which we depend is the one hundred and fifty clerks, which are to be divided into groups of ten each.

Mr. CANNON. There is now a Mexican division?

General BLACK. No; there is now what is called the Old War and Navy Division, to which all the work under the new act naturally goes, and to which this section will be added.

Mr. CANNON. Has it a chief of division and assistant chief also?

General BLACK. Yes, sir; but only one assistant chief.

Mr. CANNON. How many people are there in that division now?

General BLACK. I am not able to answer precisely, for the reason that from time to time when the chiefs come to me and say they are pressed with business I transfer clerks from divisions that are not so crowded to those that need aid. I keep no record of these transfers myself, but they are kept officially. I am not able to give the number in the Old War and Navy Division precisely, but it is about 45.

Mr. CANNON. What is the whole clerical force that you have in your Bureau—about the number?

General BLACK. I do not know exactly. Fifteen hundred and fifty-four is the total number provided for, and I think those now employed number 1,541.

Mr. CANNON. In the interview before this committee some little time ago I understood you to say that you expected to so dispose of the business before your Bureau during this and the coming fiscal year that on the 30th of June, 1888, there could be a very large reduction made in the clerical force of your Bureau. Am I correct in that?

General BLACK. I do not know, Mr. Cannon, whether I ever said that before the committee or not; but I have had some little talk with you about it.

Mr. CANNON. Let me ask you what is your understanding about it?

General BLACK. If there be no additional legislation by the end of the fiscal year ending June 30, 1888, we could dispense with a large number.

Mr. CANNON. About how many?

General BLACK. I cannot tell. If there is additional legislation—

Mr. CANNON. Upon the theory that there will be none?

General BLACK. Taking the present legislation?

Mr. CANNON. Could you dispense with several hundred, do you apprehend?

General BLACK. Yes; I should think 150 or 200 could be dispensed with. That would be a very unhappy bit of information to a great many, but it is probably true.

Mr. CANNON. Do you recollect the increase that was given in your Bureau for the fiscal year 1882-'83?

General BLACK. Only by what I find of record. Mr. Brock, the assistant chief clerk, who is here, informs me that the number added at that time was 810. That is a matter that I did not concern myself with, it being a portion of the changes that lay before the time when I took charge of the Bureau.

Mr. CANNON. What other offices will have work to do in connection with the granting of Mexican pensions outside of yours?

General BLACK. The same offices that now have to deal with the business, the Treasury and two or three of its Auditors; probably the Third and Fourth Auditors more than any others. The Second Auditor will probably have considerable work added to his office in a miscellaneous way.

Mr. CANNON. And the Third and Fourth Auditors?

General BLACK. Yes, sir.

Mr. CANNON. Also the Adjutant-General?

General BLACK. The Adjutant-General will have a very considerable addition to his work; and yet not so great an addition as might be expected from the addition of so large a number to the pension roll, for the reason that under the terms of the bill the records can be substantially completed in the Pension Bureau in a great many cases.

Mr. CANNON. Still, as the granting of a warrant was only *prima facie* evidence of the correctness of the service under the bill, would you not also have to verify it from the Adjutant-General's Office?

General BLACK. We would verify from the Adjutant-General's Office where the *prima facie* case was not perfect, or wherever it was made to appear as doubtful; otherwise we should not do it.

Mr. HOLMAN. As a matter of fact was not the information generally called for by the Pension Bureau from the Adjutant-General's Office as the basis upon which warrants were issued?

General BLACK. Yes, sir; and these records are now, as I say, very many of them, in the Pension Bureau.

Mr. HOLMAN. And will be found on the files in connection with the cases?

General BLACK. Yes, sir; and as such are immediately available.

Mr. CANNON. Will the work of the Surgeon-General's Office be increased by the passage of this bill?

General BLACK. In the case of a disability arising from service the Surgeon-General's Office would be called upon for whatever information it might have upon the subject of the disability.

Mr. HOLMAN. But that would be the same under this as under former laws?

General BLACK. Yes, sir; in some instances there are those who have served the requisite period, but who have not reached the age of 62 years, and in these claims the ground is for disability in service.

Mr. TOWNSHEND. This bill does not require that this disability shall have been incurred in the service?

General BLACK. No, sir; but, suppose a man should base his case upon a disability if he is disabled now?

Mr. TOWNSHEND. You know if he has got the disability.

General BLACK. If that is his disability now it would be sufficient, probably.

Mr. TOWNSHEND. That is the language of the bill as I understand it.

General BLACK. But there would be very little additional work to the Surgeon-General's Office.

Mr. CANNON. Let me ask you if you can give an approximate estimate as to the number of soldiers in the Mexican war who were over the age of 62 years on the passage of this bill?

General BLACK. I cannot, except in a very general way. I take it that the average age of the soldier in the Mexican war in 1847, the middle year of that war, would be from twenty to twenty-three years or twenty-four years.

Mr. TOWNSHEND. When he entered the service?

General BLACK. I think that the average age at that time of the volunteer soldiers in that war would be from twenty to twenty-three years, and forty years having elapsed the average age would be from sixty to sixty-three years. Some few instances are being presented where they are some younger.

Mr. TOWNSHEND. I know of one that is fifty-five years old.

General BLACK. I take it that their average ages were twenty to twenty-three years at the time they enlisted.

Mr. CANNON. That would make the majority of them over the age of sixty-two at this time, so that upon mere proof of that fact they would be placed upon the rolls without any further proof.

General BLACK. Yes.

Mr. TOWNSHEND. You would have to ascertain when he was enlisted and when discharged so as to learn whether he had served sixty days.

Mr. CANNON. Now, as a matter of fact in the business of your Bureau, connected as it necessarily is with the Surgeon-General's, Adjutant-General's, and Auditors' Offices, are you, comparing your Bureau with theirs, ahead of them touching that business, or are they ahead of you? How about that?

General BLACK. I do not comprehend what you mean.

Mr. CANNON. I will explain. In the current business of your Bureau you cannot adjudicate cases until you have reports from the Adjutant-General and Surgeon-General.

General BLACK. As a rule, no.

Mr. CANNON. Are the reports that you have called for from the Adjutant-General's Office being made promptly, or, if not, how far behind are they?

General BLACK. The Surgeon-General's Office is within thirty days of date. It has overtaken all its arrears within the last four months, and is now within thirty days of date. It is a rare case where I am not able to get an answer from the Surgeon-General's Office in thirty days after I make requisition.

Mr. CANNON. You say that within four months they have gained upon you so that they are within thirty days of you?

General BLACK. Yes, sir.

Mr. CANNON. What was the condition four months ago?

General BLACK. Very bad.

Mr. CANNON. How much were they behind at that time?

General BLACK. Very many thousand calls, extending over a period reaching from 1867 to date. That is, there were calls that had been made as early as 1867 that were not answered, and increasing in gradual proportion down to date.

Mr. CANNON. About how long on an average did it take to get an answer from the Surgeon-General's Office until four months ago?

General BLACK. I do not know that the question of average can be approximated, but sometimes calls were made and not answered in eight and twelve months, and repeated inquiries were necessary in order to elicit answers within that time. Finally I adopted this method: We made a call upon the Adjutant-General or Surgeon-General and allowed ninety days to elapse, and then sent a slip to him notifying him of my former call, and then if it was not answered within ninety days we sent another, and at the expiration of thirty days from that time the matter was formally reported by me to the Secretary of the Interior in the nature of a statement which was pretty nearly a complaint, and was by him certified to the Secretary of War, and attention called to the failures to respond. The adoption of that system gradually brought about the reformation of which I have spoken, so that to-day from the Surgeon-General's Office I get every call answered in about thirty days; and I have a promise that in a very little while they will answer the calls in ten days. Now, as to the Adjutant-General's Office, I might state, generally the same process has been pursued, and the same results are being approximated, but they have not yet got in as good shape and are not quite as near date as the Surgeon-General's Office. How near precisely they are I am not able to state. They are rapidly advancing in that matter.

Mr. CANNON. Suppose that this increased force was appropriated for by Congress, in the Pension Bureau, and no corresponding increase appropriated for in the other offices which you have mentioned, would you be enabled to do this work as promptly as you now think you will be?

General BLACK. I think I would be, substantially, and for the reasons that I have given you, that a great number of these cases have their completed records, so far as a record of service will make them complete, already on file in the Bureau, and there would be comparatively little occasion for applying to the Adjutant-General or the Surgeon-General; but there are cases in which it may be necessary to go back to the war, where a man laid claim to disability, in order to see what the record showed. I anticipate no very great addition to the work of the Surgeon-General's or Adjutant-General's Offices. However, I say that as an outsider. They may be able to say a very great deal that I do not know anything about. I give it from my standpoint.

Mr. CANNON. Would the inquiries you have to make of the Second Auditor delay you any?

General BLACK. That is for him to say; I do not know.

Mr. CANNON. What has the Second Auditor to do?

General BLACK. Very little, indeed; but there might be some inquiry as to bounty in the way of establishing service or something of that kind.

Mr. HOLMAN. That would only be incidental?

General BLACK. No; it would be regular business.

Mr. CANNON. What has the Third Auditor to do?

General BLACK. He is here to speak for himself, and he has probably studied the matter in connection with his business.

Mr. HOLMAN. Would he have anything to do in connection with the rolls in his office?

General BLACK. I think very little.

Mr. HOLMAN. Where are the rolls of pensioners for the Mexican war kept?

General BLACK. I think the rolls of pensioners of the Mexican war are kept at the agencies—my rolls are at the agencies. There is a record kept of them, as far as I have been able to make it, in the bureau.

Mr. HOLMAN. Is there any complete record?

General BLACK. There are the regular muster-rolls of the various organizations in the Adjutant-General's office.

Mr. HOLMAN. And also in the Third Auditor's office?

Colonel WILLIAMS (Third Auditor of the Treasury). No, sir; these rolls are not in my office. There are none but the rolls of the war of 1812, and they found their way into the Third Auditor's office very mysteriously.

Mr. CANNON (to General Black). The Surgeon-General's office, which you speak of making such a gratifying increase in its work, and the Adjutant-General's office also have been doing night work with a portion of their clerical force, have they not?

General BLACK. I have only the statement of others on that point. I understand they have.

Mr. CANNON. Considering the size of your force of nearly fifteen hundred, trained men as they are, I would ask you, if Congress should provide payment for work in extra hours, if you could not utilize your present force for the emergency occasioned by the Mexican pension bill more economically to the Government and more satisfactorily to yourself than you could 221 of these raw men thrown into your office for a service of four months?

General BLACK. For two reasons, no. The first reason is, that the building is not sufficiently lighted so that I could work extra hours. It is wholly incomplete, as you know, and the chandeliers are not put in yet, because they would be ruined almost by exposure to the limy atmosphere. If not wholly ruined, they would be considerably damaged. Then the permanent distribution of lights is not provided for. That will have to be determined by experience. I could not work the clerks extra hours to advantage on that account. Another thing is this: There are a great many of the clerks who have outside duties, as I suspect and believe—outside engagements, by which they eke out their living. It would interfere very sensibly, I think, with their outside engagements and their outside living to require extra work of them. As there is no additional expense as between paying for extra hours and paying for the extra force, I would prefer the extra force as a matter of economy and good work.

Mr. CANNON. The office hours are from 9 until 4?

General BLACK. They are from 9 until 4, with half an hour for luncheon.

Mr. CANNON. Without reference to lighting, as the days are lengthening, with this large force that you have cannot you commence work without regard to extra pay, of your own motion, as a mere matter of administration, say at 8 or 8.30 o'clock, and keep the force, or such portion of them as might be utilized in connection with this work, for an hour or half an hour, as the case may be?

General BLACK. So far as the mere clerical part of the labor is concerned, transcribing the record, handling the papers, or keeping the records, I should be able to do something of that kind possibly; but a great many of the clerks live outside of the city, or so far from the city that they cannot, with the present arrangements of railroads, &c., reach their desks at an hour earlier than they do, nor leave their desks and reach their homes at an hour later than they do. In the next place, these men have built up their whole lives about the present arrangement and distribution of labor and hours. All their domestic matters are arranged with regard to the present number of hours and their present distribution. Further, the labor to be performed by this force of which I speak is semi-judicial. They are to look at and pass upon the character, the weight and sufficiency, of evidence in a given case. There are some men who are capable of keeping up the clean mental strain that is requisite for a longer period than seven or eight hours and do good work, but they are comparatively few. The most of the men who look at cases judicially from seven to eight hours a day are ready to quit at the end of that time. The clerks have thirty days' vacation in a year. The circuit judges of the majority of our courts have six months' vacation in the course of a year, and even then they complain of mental weariness. This work ought to be done cleanly by men who have capacity to determine judicially the merits of cases upon the evidence presented. I would not want to put men that are tired with seven hours' work to a greater number of hours. Although they might go away and take dinner and then come back, I would not want to keep them after 4 o'clock, especially in the heat of the year, except on an important emergency. We know that the weather commences to be warm as early as April, and through April, May, and June at 4 o'clock these men are very hot and tired, and they ought to quit.



Mr. CANNON. You cannot work more than 250 of these clerks, can you, either old or new, to advantage upon this work?

General BLACK. Only the force that I have named. I have stated the force I wanted.

Mr. CANNON. But suppose that Congress should not appropriate for the whole force, and you should have to utilize your other force either by payment for extra hours or as a matter of administration cause them to work extra hours, you would not utilize the whole force in extra hours. Probably what number of them could you use; say 250 or 300?

General BLACK. I would not want to call on them for extra work. I think they have done all the work they ought to do when 4 o'clock is reached as a rule. It is only rarely that I call on them for extra hours.

Mr. CANNON. The fifteen section chiefs that you ask for here and the assistant chief of division, coupled with the force that you now have in the Old War Division, I take it, will do most of the judicial work in these cases?

General BLACK. The 150 men would do the most of the judicial work. These chiefs would simply supervise their work and harmonize it and see that no errors were committed.

Mr. CANNON. Speaking of the judicial work, it is not nearly so difficult touching the pensions under this act as it is under pension legislation connected with the late war.

General BLACK. The great question, as it occurs to me, for judicial consideration in each of these cases would be the question of identity—the proof presented on the question of identity. There will be records and there will be other questions, but the important question to be passed upon will be the question of identity. On that point you know, as a practicing lawyer of long experience, that it does require a pretty clear head to settle in some cases whether the man who presents himself is the man who served. There may be instances where it will be necessary to call for other proof of this fact, and there may be instances where neighbors testify to things and generally state things which are impressions in their minds, and that are not matters of positive proof, and it will take a clear-headed man to settle such cases. That is the important question that we have to meet and deal with in the cases arising under this bill.

Mr. CANNON. Let me see if I understand the matter. The only thing to be determined is: Did this man serve in the Mexican war; is he now sixty-two years of age; did he serve 60 days; and if he is not sixty-two years is he disabled.

General BLACK. Yes, sir.

Mr. CANNON. And then is he the man that he represents himself to be?

General BLACK. Yes, sir.

Mr. HOLMAN. Then as to widows, upon his death the proof is necessary as to the marriage, the death of the husband, and that he was the identical man who served in the Army?

General BLACK. There are under that law, which is a very comprehensive one, three clauses which it created and provided for pension, under each or either one of which the claim may be made. The proof may be made partially under one classification and attempted to be made partially under another. Such a division of proof would not entitle the claimant to pension. Some clear-headed man must say whether he has made out his case or not under one of these clauses.

Mr. CANNON. I must confess that if it requires any considerable degree of skill or care and ability to do this work, it occurs to me, as the work was to be done inside of five months, that you would find yourself, after you had educated these men so that you could depend upon them, in the condition of realizing that your five months were gone before you had really assorted up your men.

General BLACK. I can see that your conclusion from your standpoint is not at all unnatural; but it is not the conclusion that I have reached from mine.

Mr. CANNON. Some years ago, if I recollect properly, the hours in the Departments were fixed by law at not less than seven hours—from 9 till 4, I believe. Are you familiar with that legislation?

General BLACK. I know substantially that there is legislation of that kind; but I would not like to state what it is.

Mr. CANNON. I find it in section 4 of the act making appropriations for the legislative, executive, and judicial expenses for the fiscal year ending June, 1884. It is:

“That hereafter it shall be the duty of the heads of the several Executive Departments, in the interest of the public service, to require of all clerks and other employes, of whatever grade or class, in their respective Departments not less than seven hours of labor each day, except Sundays and days declared public holidays by law, or executive order: *Provided*, That the heads of the Departments may by special order, stating the reason, further extend or limit the hours of service of any clerk or employe in their Departments, respectively, but in case of an extension it shall be without additional compensation, and all absence from the Departments on

the part of said clerks or other employes, in excess of such leave of absence as may be granted by the heads thereof, which shall not exceed thirty days in any one year, except in case of sickness, shall be without pay."

Now, every year you may grant thirty days' leave of absence or may grant none, as I understand it. I want to ask you if in your Bureau that act has been complied with?

General BLACK. The Pension Bureau is a part of the Interior Department, and the regulations for its government prescribed under that statute were issued by the Secretary of the Interior, and the terms of it were complied with very closely.

Mr. CANNON. In these regulations?

General BLACK. The Secretary of the Interior published an order or circular shortly after the passage of that act, in which all these matters are set up in detail as to the construction of the law and as directions for the employes.

Mr. CANNON. The object of my question is to ascertain whether in your Bureau it has been complied with.

General BLACK. In my Bureau the working hours are from 9 until 4, with a half-hour allowed at noon for luncheon. As a matter of fact, if a division falls behind in its work it is sometimes called upon to make it good by a few hours' extra work.

Mr. CANNON. Has the rule been invariably complied with?

General BLACK. It has in almost every instance. There are a few instances in which it seemed to me it required a variation from the rule; as, for instance, in the course of construction of the new building some division interfered with the construction, and I adopted the rule of letting the clerks go for a little while. It had to be done in order to allow the completion of this work. But as a general rule the work has been eminently satisfactory in the output or product. A great many more days' work have been done in a given period than in past time.

Mr. CANNON. It has been stated, but I know nothing about the matter myself, that on one or more occasions on a day not a holiday the office had been closed—that is your office has been closed—and the clerks dismissed for the day, so as not to give the seven hours' service. If so, how frequently did that occur?

General BLACK. Do you mean a whole day? I have let the clerks out a little earlier on Saturdays on some occasions.

Mr. CANNON. How much earlier and how frequently?

General BLACK. Generally an hour, and I suppose a dozen times.

Mr. TOWNSHEND. On days that were not holidays?

General BLACK. On Saturdays.

Mr. CANNON. Generally an hour and sometimes longer?

General BLACK. No time longer. They have been allowed to go at 3 o'clock on Saturdays sometimes where an exceptionally good week's work had been accomplished, and they have sometimes turned in and worked until later hours as an emergency might occur. The Bureau has done more days' work in a given time within the last two years than during any corresponding period that I am aware of by the record.

Mr. HOLMAN. I have but one question to ask you, General Black. As you are now informed, the only other Department or Bureau of the Government that would be closely connected with the Pension Bureau in the administration of the Mexican pension law is the Adjutant-General's Office?

General BLACK. Yes, sir.

Mr. HOLMAN. And you possess the necessary official rolls in your office in one form or another, the probable data of which is in the Adjutant-General's Office, and that a large number of these cases will be adjudicated upon without other information than that which is in the possession of the Bureau.

General BLACK. Of the record evidence? Yes, sir.

Mr. HOLMAN. You think that you will only have relations incidentally with the Surgeon-General's Office, the Second Auditor's Office, and the Third Auditor's Office?

General BLACK. That is about all—only incidentally. There will be probably as many applications made as I have stated in my letter of January 22—48,574. I ask for 150 clerks on adjudicating desks. That would make for each man, from the 1st day of March to the 30th of June, 399½ cases to be disposed of, or 400 in round numbers, and that would make an average output for each man of that force of 3½ cases per day, beginning with the 1st day of March. At the first some part of the time would be consumed in getting the force together, and a good deal of the time will necessarily be consumed in the preliminary work of adjudication; so that I think if I got 150 men that will make 399 or 400 adjudications in the remaining four months of this fiscal year it will be good work. The amount that I spoke of in this letter of the 22d of January, as clerk-hire, is \$257,000. That represents the pay-roll for a year for the force that I have called for. One-third of that would be the amount that would be requisite from the 1st of March, inclusive, for the four months ending June 30.

Mr. HOLMAN. Instead of appropriating for the increased force of 221 persons on the basis you have suggested up to the 30th of June, might it not be safer to name a smaller number and extend the time to a more remote period?

General BLACK. That is a matter that I considered. I believed that I would be able to do in this work in this time with that force without interfering in any way with the current work. I thought it would be a very satisfactory thing to do and an act of great justice. These men have been, many of them, forty years pensionless; some of them entitled to pension during a considerable portion of that time. I thought that process which would do the work quickest certainly would be preferable. I think so still. I think there would be less tendency to fasten this force on the permanent rolls of the Government if they were employed with the understanding that their services were to terminate at the end of the fiscal year.

Mr. HOLMAN. To render it reasonably certain that the necessarily efficient force should be got in your Bureau to make it effective within so comparatively a short period of time, would it not be necessary that in addition to such appointments as might be made through Civil Service procedure the Secretary of the Interior should be authorized to make appointments upon the recommendation of the Commissioner of Pensions.

General BLACK. The answer to that question, Judge Holman, will depend upon two or three considerations. The policy of this administration of which I am a member is to sustain the rule and to apply it as extensively as possible. I feel bound to effectuate that policy to a reasonable degree in any recommendation I might make or any suggestion I may give, and of course entirely as regards my action. As to the method of procedure, it seemed to me that the Secretary of the Interior might be intrusted with the nomination and appointment of men for so brief a time; but I do not feel like urging it without his concurrence, nor do I feel like suggesting it without his approval and that of the President, to whom he is responsible.

Mr. CANNON. I want to ask you, general, if you can at all approximate the number of cases where the record or the information in your office is sufficient, so that you would not have to call upon the Adjutant-General's Office?

General BLACK. I cannot know. The only safe way for me to proceed is upon the hypothesis that somewhere or other every case will be lacking in complete record proof. There will be cases where nothing will be needed beside the record, but the percentage of them I do not know. I have no means at the present of knowing.

Mr. CANNON. The only safe way for you to proceed is for you to call upon him in every case.

General BLACK. No; not in calling upon the Adjutant-General, but it will be necessary that I should proceed upon the hypothesis that in every case there will be other proof necessary beside the record.

Mr. CANNON. My question was if you had any data by which you could say how many calls you would have to make upon the Adjutant-General.

General BLACK. No, sir; I have not.

Mr. HOLMAN. I think the General misapprehended the question as to the extent that he would have to call upon the Adjutant-General. I understood the General's answer to be that there may be cases in which the record in the Pension Bureau might be complete, and that nothing more would be needed, but that in almost every case of uncertainty he would have to call upon the Adjutant-General.

General BLACK. No, sir; I cannot tell how often I would have to call on the Adjutant-General's Office.

Mr. TOWNSHEND. Suppose that the committee recommend only one assistant chief, ten clerks of class 2, and ten of class 1, can you state what the effect of that would be?

General BLACK. Just exactly what I have pointed out in the letter of January 22. The work will necessarily be delayed, or else current work will have to be crowded to one side, and that I cannot reasonably consent to do. Another thing I wish to call the committee's attention to. Under this act of January 29 a special line of procedure has to be adopted. I have mapped that out in my mind in the instructions which I have had printed with the approval of the Secretary. I do not want to get them mixed up in any way with the current business, which has about it all the complications, embarrassments, and entanglements of twenty years of mingled practice; and we all know that when men are accustomed to dealing with tortuous things, such as some of these old pension cases are, and has dealt with that kind of thing for years and years, his mind is affected thereby, and its processes are not adapted to the consideration of other matters. An old clerk would not be as effective for the purposes of the Bureau under this act as a perfectly competent new clerk, until he had unlearned a great deal he has been practicing for many years.

Mr. TOWNSHEND. I merely wanted to know what would be an approximation of the length of retardation if we only give you the force I mentioned—one assistant chief, ten clerks of class 2, and ten of class 1.

General BLACK. The effect would be very serious. It would retard the business from one to two or three years in many of these cases.

Mr. TOWNSHEND. But if we give you what force you ask for you think you will finish the work by the 30th of June?



General BLACK. I undertake to do so.

Mr. TOWNSHEND. I want to ask you in regard to these 27 clerks that are assigned to the Secretary's office from your Department. There is a communication here from the Assistant Secretary recommending that these clerks on detached service shall be restored to your office. I wish to ascertain if these 27 clerks are desired to be restored to your office in addition to the 221 clerks that you estimate for?

General BLACK. That is what I have asked for. The occasion for the communication was separate and distinct from the Mexican pension bill. The 27 people who are with the Secretary of the Interior are charged to my rolls at an expense of \$34,700 a year. They are doing work in the Interior Department. They are essential to the work of the Secretary of the Interior, and they are most desirable in the places to which they properly belong in the Pension Office. There is a great abundance of work for them to do in the Pension Office, and there is a great abundance for them to do in the Interior Department. It creates a fictitious impression as to the cost of pension work to have them on detail as they are now, and yet I know that the Secretary absolutely needs them, and needs them all.

Mr. TOWNSHEND. If they should be restored to your office would it be necessary for us to provide for 28 persons in lieu of those at the Secretary's office?

General BLACK. I think so.

Mr. TOWNSHEND. Suppose we were to strike out the 27 clerks, dismissing them from the service of the office, would you then find it necessary to call upon the committee for 27 in addition to the force you have asked for under the Mexican pension act?

General BLACK. Well, no, sir; only those I have recommended. These men are all appropriated for under the present law. If they are appropriated for in the Secretary's office then they come back to my office.

Mr. TOWNSHEND. Suppose they were dismissed from the service entirely, would you call for other clerks in lieu of them in your office?

General BLACK. Only as I have already asked for them under the general appropriation act.

Mr. TOWNSHEND. Suppose we had dismissed them, would the Secretary be likely to call upon you for 27 of your present force?

General BLACK. He would have to do it.

Mr. TOWNSHEND. The effect would be simply to cut down your force to that extent?

General BLACK. Yes, sir; he would have to have that force.

Mr. HOLMAN. That is, he has duties in that office more important to be performed than in yours?

General BLACK. Yes; he has got them now upon the theory that they are absolutely essential.

Mr. HOLMAN. You are not acquainted with the duties of the Secretary's office?

General BLACK. I have no official knowledge of that work in the Secretary's office, but I have positive personal knowledge.

Mr. TOWNSHEND. What you want is this, that these clerks should be restored to your office and others provided for the Secretary of the Interior?

General BLACK. Yes, sir.

Mr. HOLMAN. In the event of the restoration of these 27 to your office, you would still ask for the 221, or would that 27 be deducted from that number?

General BLACK. I should be very thankful to take them from that number; that is, 221 less that number.

Mr. TOWNSHEND. But if we should restore these to your office and make no provision for the Secretary's office in an equal number of clerks, would it not end in their being detailed again?

General BLACK. Yes, sir.

Mr. HOLMAN. That is, if the Secretary had the power.

General BLACK. Yes, sir.

Mr. HOLMAN. When Congress appropriates a body of clerks specifically for a Bureau it will be only in an extreme emergency that the Secretary would withdraw them from that Bureau?

General BLACK. Yes, sir; from a continued and pressing necessity.

Mr. TOWNSHEND. In a letter to the committee from the Secretary he recommends the establishment of a new pension agency at New Orleans, with the salary for the agent of \$4,000. Will you state to the committee what the necessity is for that agency?

General BLACK. The necessity for the agency arises from the geographical location of New Orleans and from the fact that to the vast bulk of pensioners that will be added under the present act New Orleans is naturally central for purposes of commerce, &c., for the States of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Southern Arkansas, and Texas. A great majority of those who are added by the provisions of this act will be added in those States. The present agencies pay to 365,000 people on an appropriation of \$150,000, with a clerk hire of \$72,000 and an agent's pay of about \$20,000, and \$15,000 for contingent expenses. The clerks in these agencies are worked

## 10 LEGISLATIVE, EXECUTIVE AND JUDICIAL APPROPRIATIONS.

until 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 o'clock at night. They begin work at from 8 to 8.30 in the morning, and they are doing the work upon the lowest possible scale of honest living compensation, and the addition of 40,000 people to the rolls of the agencies would result in retarding the work very greatly and the payments to be made.

Mr. TOWNSHEND. The Secretary of the Interior has recommended an increased appropriation for that force.

General BLACK. Yes, sir; of about \$25,000.

Mr. TOWNSHEND. That increases it from \$150,000 to \$175,000.

General BLACK. Yes, sir.

Mr. TOWNSHEND. And also \$15,000 for contingent expenses.

General BLACK. Yes, sir.

Mr. HOLMAN. How are they increased?

General BLACK. The contingent expenses cover a great many things that are done at the agencies, in the way of printing vouchers and other printing charges, postage, and stationery. With the enormous amount of correspondence that they have in the work on hand, they exhaust the appropriation to a cent, and I have to stint them as I hate to stint anybody. They scarcely have enough of that \$9,000 that has heretofore been available to pay those absolutely necessary expenses which any man would have to pay in his private business. The addition of 40,000 pensioners, and the establishment of a new agency would add nearly to the amount I have named. The \$25,000 asked for additional clerk-hire is due to the fact that I have named, that the present force of clerks is doing all that they can, humanly speaking, do. There is a great responsibility upon the agent. A single mispayment of a single check may sometimes sweep away the living profits of his salary, and in some instances take away his whole salary. The clerks they employ are very intelligent, very capable, and very diligent. The rolls are being added to every day by the current work as well as in the Mexican work. This addition to the salary fund is to pay these clerks that are to take these new duties and those that might be made by the new agency. They are working as I know of no other Government clerks anywhere. In the cities of Chicago, New York, and Indianapolis, wherever the Government has Treasury officials alongside of these pension agency clerks, the pension agency clerks are doing very much more work and receiving much less pay.

Mr. CANNON. They could all be very well paid without a very great additional increase to the force?

General BLACK. No, sir; for the reason I have given you. There is only one agency contemplated that could handle this body of 40,000 pensioners. For instance, in the Knoxville agency, which is the nearest agency to this point, it would render it almost impossible for that agency to do the work of a quarter in a quarter without a great increase in the clerical force.

Mr. HOLMAN. What would you think of the idea of paying directly from your office this Mexican pension fund, instead of establishing any new agencies?

General BLACK. It would, in judgment, be a very unfortunate departure, and I will point out the reason. The agent pays to-day in a locality wherefrom he draws his clerks, and where he has his personal relationships, whatever they are, and over that territory, broad as it is, he has supervision under the responsibility of his bond, and a false payment made by him, or an erroneous payment made by him, is at his cost. In many instances that is a great protection to the Government, which could not be afforded by payment from a central agency at Washington, unless that agent was required to give a bond correspondingly increased. His duties would be all over the United States, and he could not exercise that personal supervision that an agent can in a district.

Mr. HOLMAN. Well, it is always a case of identification?

General BLACK. Yes, sir.

Mr. HOLMAN. These drafts are drawn by the agent on the Government, and as a general thing they come back through some national bank?

General BLACK. They come back through some bank or through merchants.

Mr. HOLMAN. And the question of identity is almost always one that has to be disposed of by the bank?

General BLACK. Yes, sir; through the cashing of the checks.

Mr. TOWNSHEND. About the bill we were discussing here a moment ago, to provide for an additional appropriation; I wish to get from General Black whether that money is to be immediately available or not? The bill is in this form:

"That there is hereby appropriated, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, for the payment of the pensions provided for under the act entitled 'An act granting pensions to the soldiers and sailors of the Mexican war, and for other purposes,' approved January 29, 1887, as follows: For the balance of the fiscal year ending June 30, 1887, \$2,300,000; for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1888, \$4,600,000; in all, \$6,900,000: *Provided*, That the whole sum herein appropriated shall be available for expenditure until the close of the fiscal year ending June 30, 1888."

I desire to know whether the money we appropriate for this fragment of a fiscal year would be available at once or not? And will it be available for the next year?

General BLACK. I should think so.

## STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN S. WILLIAMS.

Hon. JOHN S. WILLIAMS, Third Auditor of the Treasury, also appeared before the committee.

Mr. CANNON. I would like to ask you if you would require an increase of force under this bill?

Mr. WILLIAMS. Every pensioner that is created by Congress is on the books of the Third Auditor's Office. We keep an account with every pensioner that appears on the rolls of the Pension Office, and we also keep an account with the pension agents, so that with these 40,000 pensioners under this Mexican pension bill there will be 40,000 names added to the accounts in the Third Auditor's Office.

Mr. CABELL. The material proposition is whether or not you will need any additional force.

Mr. WILLIAMS. I think not, unless this dependent pension bill becomes a law; then I expect I would. I consulted with the chief of my pension division this morning, and we concluded that we could get along with the force that is provided for in the appropriation bill for this year. You know that there has been considerable reduction in the clerical force, and I think we are doing on an average at least from 33 to 40 per cent. more work in the pension division than was ever done before.

Will you allow me to make a voluntary statement that is within my official cognizance as Third Auditor of the Treasury, and which affects me and the administration of my office, and that is, you are not paying these pension agency clerks the wages that they earn. It is niggardly and mean, and, in my judgment, disgraceful to work these clerks the way they are.

## STATEMENT OF ADJUTANT-GENERAL DRUM.

Adjutant-General DRUM also appeared before the committee.

Mr. HOLMAN. Will you state, general, whether there is any other office than your own that has legal control of the rolls of the soldiers of the Mexican war?

General DRUM. I have alone.

Mr. HOLMAN. There is no duplicate of those rolls?

General DRUM. No, sir.

Mr. HOLMAN. The only duplicates that would occur in the current business of the Government would be mainly in those furnished from time to time in former years to the Pension Bureau?

General DRUM. General Black will get all his information from me—that is, all the information that he would want.

Mr. HOLMAN. In view of the statement of General Black, which you heard, as to the extent that the Pension Bureau is now in possession of information from your office in regard to the services of Mexican soldiers, what is your judgment as to whether there will be necessity for an increase of your clerical force to meet the demands which will be made upon it by the Commissioner of Pensions in the execution of the law during the present fiscal year and next fiscal year in the adjudication of Mexican pension claims?

General DRUM. As a matter of fact, I am satisfied that he will have the brunt of it to bear. The full force of it has to fall upon the Pension Bureau, and though the Commissioner of Pensions is able, as I think he will be to some extent, to get from the *prima facie* evidence that he can obtain elsewhere than my office, it has occurred to me that there might be many cases come up to me, but I doubt whether I will want any increase. I am satisfied that the Commissioner of Pensions has to carry the load.

Mr. HOLMAN. The number of calls upon our office will not be very great then?

General DRUM. Not very great, but of course there will be calls. The present heads of the Pension Bureau and of the Adjutant-General's Office are in the most perfect accord and there is not a single suggestion that comes from me to him or from him to me that looks to the interest of the Government that we do not adopt, and I have not met General Black until this morning.

Mr. HOLMAN. What is your judgment as to whether it will be necessary to increase that force or not?

General DRUM. I do not think it will be.

Mr. HOLMAN. For what length of time in the future, in your judgment, will it be necessary to employ the clerks in your office in duties in connection with the Pension Office beyond the usual hours of labor?

General DRUM. I had hoped to put an end to it by the 1st of March, but I think by the 1st of April I will be up sufficiently to keep up with the current business. The business increased so much that General Black was forced to call the attention of the Secretary of the Interior to the arrears. As far back as in June, I think, I was about

36,000 calls behind. Of course we must always remain behind, because it is not simply asking a question that comes to me from the Commissioner's office, but it is a question for the correction of record; it may be as to muster or desertion, and it takes a great deal of time to straighten out these cases. It may take two years or five years, because the whole labor for that must fall upon the man. I help him as far as I can; but in that class of cases we cannot get up; we must always be behind. I can state now, that while on the 1st of December I was about 51,000 calls behind, on the 15th day of February I was only 35,000 behind, and I feel pretty sure that by the 1st of April we will be up with it, and I will also make progress with the class of cases that I talked about when we were here under the act of 1885, and also under the act of June 5, 1884.

I put everybody to work, except those who are physically disabled. I had to do it, as I was as completely snowed under as possible.

Mr. HOLMAN. And you are very glad to see light ahead?

General DRUM. Yes, sir.

Mr. CANNON. You have kept even with the current work since the 1st of December and have gained 15,000 calls?

General DRUM. Yes, sir.

Mr. CANNON. You have done this by working over hours?

General DRUM. Yes.

Mr. CANNON. Then you find it an effective way to accomplish this?

General DRUM. Yes, so far as gaining to that extent. Up to that time I was falling behind; in June I was 36,000 behind.

Mr. CANNON. What is the number of your clerical force.

General DRUM. It is about 585.

Mr. CANNON. What proportion of this clerical force have you been working over hours since the 1st of December?

General DRUM. For the month of December I worked about 140. After I had the interview with the committee, and I saw that my friend, the chairman of the committee, did not like the idea of extra compensation, and I did not think I was going to get it, I had to call for volunteers and 147 volunteered to go on, but I felt that would not help me unless I put everybody to work, and I have put everybody to extra work except those who would be physically injured by it.

Mr. CANNON. And you think it will be continued up until about the 1st of April?

General DRUM. I think I will be up by the 1st of April?

Mr. CANNON. What are the extra hours over and above the regular hours of work by your force?

General DRUM. They work from half-past six to nine.

Mr. CANNON. That is two hours and a half, making nine and a half hours a day?

General DRUM. Yes, sir.

Mr. CANNON. You think that you have made very good progress?

General DRUM. Yes; there are certain men that live in the country, and I see these men and find out exactly what time they can get to the office, and if they can get there at half-past eight I work them until five.

Mr. TOWNSHEND. How many hours do you work them at night?

General DRUM. From two and-a-half to three hours.

Mr. HOLMAN. About how large a number do you work?

General DRUM. All my clerical force, except those I have stated; I suppose about 400.

Mr. TOWNSHEND. Your idea is simply to use them to catch up with the work?

General DRUM. That is all; I am behind in every branch.

Mr. TOWNSHEND. I will ask you whether the clerks could endure the work all the year round day and night?

General DRUM. No; I would not like to try that. I would not like to try it in warm weather. I think perhaps it will do very well at this season, and that we could perhaps get along up to the 1st of June.

Mr. CANNON. And you have found that they do very effective service?

General DRUM. I find we have gained just that much in that time.

FEBRUARY 21, 1887.

Hon. J. C. BLACK,

*Commissioner of Pensions:*

The subcommittee differs somewhat as to the length of time for which you wanted any additional force provided for.

Do you want it only from March 4 to June 30, 1887, or do you want it until June 30, 1888?

Please answer at once.

WM. S. HOLMAN.

Hon. W. S. HOLMAN:

If the full number asked for is allowed, will want them until June 30, 1887, from March 1; if a less number is allowed, will want them for a corresponding increased period.

JOHN C. BLACK,  
*Commissioner.*

---

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES U. S.,  
*Washington, D. C., February 21, 1887.*

Hon. JNO. C. BLACK,  
*Commissioner of Pensions:*

In view of your proposed increased force in the Pension Bureau, would an increased appropriation be required for furniture and desks; if so, how much?

Please answer by telegraph at the earliest moment.

W. S. HOLMAN.

---

Hon. W. S. HOLMAN:

By the most rigid economy and the construction of temporary pine tables, I think I can get along without any additional appropriation for the present fiscal year. If, however, the committee should decide that more substantial furniture should be used, I would ask an appropriation of \$1,000.

**H. R. 2—16**

J. C. BLACK,  
*Commissioner.*

○