

*War Appropriation*

Mr. QUELCH: There is one further point I should like to refer to in connection with the matter raised by the hon. member for Battle River. The argument has often been used that the government would not be justified in giving clear title to these soldiers because the taxpayers' money was used in buying the land. Even if that were true I would not agree altogether with the argument, but it is not a true statement of fact. In many cases the land sold to the soldier settlers cost the government absolutely nothing and it was sold at fairly high prices. In other words, the soldier settlers were exploited and there was profiteering at their expense. I should like to read from a return made to the house last year in connection with the cost of some of these lands. This return was made May 23, 1944. I asked this question:

What was the cost to the dominion government of the following lands that were sold to soldier settlers in 1920: sections 6, 13, 14, 15, E $\frac{1}{2}$ , 16, 22, 23, 24, of range 18, township 33, west of 4 and sections 32, 30 NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  26, 23, 22, W $\frac{1}{2}$ , 19, 18, 17, 16, 15 and NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  13, of range 18, township 32, west of 4?

The reply was "nil". It did not cost the government a cent. Then my next question was:

What was the average price per acre?

The answer given was \$16.38. In the same area civilians were buying South African scrip from the government for \$3 an acre; yet the government were charging the soldier settlers \$16.38 an acre for land that did not cost them a cent. I have continually contended that since it did not cost the government anything to obtain this land they should be prepared to sell it at the same price as they were selling South African scrip, \$3 an acre. My next question was:

What is the total debt of soldier settlers or members of veterans guard still resident on these lands?

The answer was, "\$35,448.30". I then asked:

How many soldiers originally settled on these lands?

The answer given was, 40. I then asked:

How many have paid for their land in full?

The answer was, 3. Out of a total of forty who settled in that area we find that at the end of twenty-five years only three have been able to pay for their land in full. This is owing to the fact that the price charged was exorbitant, and even with the prices that prevail to-day we find that land is being sold for far less than \$16 an acre. I can say that because

[Mr. I. A. Mackenzie.]

not long ago I bought some land in that area for a price away below \$16 an acre. My next question was:

How many have abandoned their land?

The answer was, 17. Out of a total of forty, seventeen have had to abandon their land. The next questions and answers were:

8. How many are still resident? 13.

9. How many are in the veterans guard but still hold their land? 4.

It is all right for the minister to say that many soldier settlers are making their payments. The thing that interests me is not how many settlers are making their payments but how many are still down and out to-day. Unfortunately there are a great many in that position. I know of settlers who have had pressure put upon them to leave the land because it is claimed they are not farming in an efficient manner.

I know of one case of an old fellow who was refused an adjustment on his land upon the ground that he is not able to farm efficiently. He is getting too old and they are trying to put him off the land. He is an old Irishman and he told me that he would have to get a shot-gun if they bothered him any more. That is the kind of spirit I am glad to see in these soldier settlers who have suffered such hardship. The superintendent of soldier settlement knows very well the land to which I am referring and I urge the minister to give consideration to this matter.

Mr. KNOWLES: Included in the appropriation of \$2,000,000,000 which is now before us there is a substantial amount for old age pensions and I should like to speak briefly on this matter. I refer the Minister of Finance in particular to the discussion that took place in the house last year early in June during the course of which a number of suggestions as to changes that might be made in the old age pension regulations were offered to the government from all sides of the house. The minister showed great interest in the suggestions that were made and acceded to our request to have them compiled and studied by the officials of his department in charge of the matter. Later in the session, on August 14, I had occasion to ask the minister whether any progress had yet been made in connection with the implementing of these suggestions. The minister replied that a study had been made and an excellent memorandum prepared, but that nothing further was possible at that stage.

The minister knows that this is a subject in which I am greatly interested, and there is a good deal I could say but I am going to refrain from any lengthy remarks under present