

that induces us to urge at this time, as the minister himself very frankly recognizes, the necessity for ample precaution. This is a matter of very great importance and of far-reaching consequences, and one that should be removed from any possibility of maladministration.

Mr. POULIOT (Temiscouata) (Translation): Mr. Speaker, I listened with much interest to the eloquent speech just delivered by the hon. member for West Calgary (Mr. Bennett). Everybody has regard for his integrity, and all I have to say, in answer to his speech, is that boodlers are not to be found on this side of the House.

Mr. EVANS: Replying again to the leader of the opposition, I think the right hon. gentleman must admit, as I believe the government realizes, that this is a belated measure. Had it been brought forward three or four years ago as it should have been, it would have saved a large percentage of those who have left their lands. Many of these fellows have sacrificed all they had, some of them, indeed, having given up homesteads that they owned outright. It is all gone. They spent what money they had for seed and equipment, and in my judgment they have a claim upon the country as well as any of those who are still on the land. The door is open for a revaluation and all that is needed is to push it open a little wider. I should like to see section 2 include those who have already gone, but who can still take advantage of settlement under the revaluation scheme.

Mr. MURPHY: I want to make a few remarks which will be very brief, more for the purpose of placing myself on record with regard to this important legislation than with a view to adding anything to the discussion which has already taken place. This is a matter of vital import to a considerable portion of the constituency I represent. Probably all of the constituencies in western Canada are suffering to-day from the ill effects which have manifested themselves in connection with soldier settlement, but I believe that the condition is rather more marked in my riding than in any other. A revaluation of the lands held by returned men who purchased homes under the Soldier Settlement Act is in my opinion long overdue. Revaluation should have been made, not later than two years after the sensational drop in farm land values. I am speaking now, of course, of farm land values in western Canada, as I am not so familiar with the situation in other parts of the Dominion.

Let me make it clear at the outset that I am not in favour of the principle of state paternalism. Of late years we as a people seem to have been losing that admirable quality of sturdy independence that characterized our forefathers, that indomitable spirit which enabled them to subdue the wilderness and make Canada what she is today. There is a growing tendency in our country to shoulder upon the state responsibilities which should properly be borne by the individual, and if the assistance which this legislation proposes to give were intended for any other class than the returned soldiers I would be utterly opposed to it. I wish, however, to place myself on record here now as being absolutely in accord with the spirit of the legislation, for these reasons. In the first place it is an undoubted fact that in some cases unsuitable lands were chosen while other lands were given too high a valuation owing to the rascality of certain individuals who managed to have themselves placed upon the board which valued these lands. This applies particularly to that part of my constituency to which I have just referred. Lands were selected for the returned soldier which should never have been chosen. The land on which many returned soldiers were settled should never have been selected. It was not the fault of the government, nor was it the fault of the settlers themselves, it was the fault of certain individuals who, taking advantage of their knowledge of local conditions and of the desire of the soldiers to rehabilitate themselves, made them the target for their rascality.

Thirdly, I am in favour of this resolution because of the great depreciation in land values. This is true not only of the land purchased by the soldier settlers from the board, but also of all land in western Canada, and I am sure my Progressive friends will bear me out in this respect. I would say that there has been as great a drop in the value of farm lands generally as there has been in the value of land owned by soldier settlers.

On account of the difficulties encountered by soldier settlers and others, the situation of some municipalities in the west is critical, because a considerable area of wild land was taken up for the purpose of soldier settlement. Consequently the municipalities were put to great expense in constructing roads and establishing schools, and when many of these soldier settlers were forced to abandon their holdings the lands reverted to the crown, and became non-taxable, and the resultant loss of revenue seriously embarrassed the