

in many parts of southern British Columbia we have large areas of some of the finest land utterly waste. I could cite many cases to support this statement. I have in mind a block of 800 acres of the finest land in one section of the province, occupied, I understand, by three small Indian families, who make their living mainly by selling wood. At this juncture of the nation's history it is almost a national calamity so much of the best land in our province should thus lie waste. We pride ourselves on doing justice to the Indian. I am the last man in this House to suggest that anything but the fullest measure of justice should be meted out to him. But in doing justice to the Indian, let us not do an injustice to the white man or to the country. I have in mind another case where, adjacent to a city in British Columbia, there are some thousands of acres of choice land bordering right on the city limits, impeding most seriously the development of that city and the adjacent country. I might enumerate many other cases. Suffice it to say that in the southern part of the province it is a most serious problem,—in fact, in some places it is an almost intolerable situation, and the citizens virtually demand that the Indian be placed, in this regard, upon the same footing as the white man. In other words, that he have a good chance, and, if anything, a little better chance than the white man, but that he be not allowed to hold thousands of acres of the finest land without any pretense whatever of its being used for purposes of production.

Now, Sir, my object in introducing this amendment is simply that the same provision which applies to the purchase of speculators' land be made applicable to certain Indian Reserves, and that where it can be shown that there is thus a large area of land unused, and that in all human probability it will remain unused, that the department be required to sell that land. I do not think as a matter of fact that the provisions of the amendment I suggest may ever have to be used, but if the clause is there, and it is known that we can use it, it will facilitate the purchase of such property. For this and other reasons, which I might enumerate but do not wish to take up the time of the House at the present juncture, I respectfully urge upon the minister his considering the adoption of my amendment for the benefit of returned soldiers settling in the province of British Columbia. It simply means that whatever land may be deemed necessary by the board may be

purchased not only from all persons, firms, and corporations in any part of Canada, but—with special reference to British Columbia—from the Indian superintendent for the province or other officer who has the power of acting as vendor.

Mr. McKENZIE: Before the minister answers that question, the Indian Land Act itself provides for the methods of procedure by which we deal with Indian lands, and I think it would be rather dangerous to adopt another method in this Act.

Mr. MEIGHEN: From the statutory standpoint I agree with the leader of the Opposition, that if such action were taken, it should be taken by an amendment of the Indian Act.

We have already prepared amendments to the Indian Act which will make applicable all the necessary provisions of this Act applying to returned soldiers who are Indians and which will make the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs take the place of the Soldier's Settlement Board in the administration of that phase of the Act.

The point raised by the hon. member for Fraser Valley (Mr. Stacey) is one of the most important that the committee has to consider; it was referred to some weeks ago by the member for Selkirk (Mr. Hay). When the Bill was under consideration providing for the expropriation of small portions of land on Indian reserves for public purposes, it was urged that we should not deal with Indian Reserve lands on the same principles as those upon which we dealt with private lands. It is a matter for very serious consideration indeed, whether, in view of our negotiations and settlements with the Indians in this country, which proceeded in the main, on the assumption that they were a separate nation, and that the agreements were entered into by Canada on the one hand and by the various tribes and separate peoples on the other, we ought to invade the sanctity of the treaties made and settlements arranged, for the purpose of taking their lands in order that they might be used not by the State, but by private persons. I cannot say that I have made up my mind that that argument is irresistible; I really am not disposed to think it is. It is very questionable, though, what might result if we did take the stand urged by the member for Fraser Valley. Undoubtedly it would result in dissension, and perhaps in the issue being carried beyond the bounds of this country for settlement. No doubt, whatever settlement Canada should arrive at would,