

where to go or what to do. I hope the minister will be able to do something for him. I have no doubt there are other similar cases. Surely this is the worst kind of policy which could be followed either at this or any other time.

Mr. NICHOLSON: Some time ago when the orders of the day were called I raised a question of policy in connection with the administration of this department, and I was advised that the discussion should stand until the estimates were before us. I referred in particular to a soldier settler who for the second time in his life has joined the army. Shortly after joining he was notified that unless he made payment within thirty days he would lose all equity in his farm. I took the matter up with the minister, and I appreciate the consideration given by him. I understand that man's case is to stand over until the conclusion of the war. The point I make is that a notice of that sort, going out to a man in uniform who is associating with other soldiers, has a disturbing influence. I know the board was able to show that the man had been on the place for twenty years and had not made any large payments. But if it took the board twenty years to find that this man was not an efficient farmer—and I am still not prepared to agree he was not efficient—surely such drastic action should not be taken. I believe very few hon. members would have gone to that place twenty years ago and worked as hard as this man did. I think it would be agreed that he settled on submarginal land. He was a good citizen; so far as I know he did not spend his money on drink or gambling or in other objectionable ways.

My submission is that if the board saw fit to leave him on the land for twenty years, at least it should leave title to the land with him until the war is over. I would ask the minister to make a statement of policy as it affects men who join the army. It is most unfair to put the squeeze on them and close out their equities, thereby making the land available to someone who may have a few hundred dollars in cash. The minister should announce a policy which would indicate that these men could go back to their land. I understand protection is given under some provincial legislation, but that is not applicable to land held under the soldier settlement scheme. I would ask the minister to make a statement regarding the man in uniform whose dealings with the board might result in his being deprived of his equity while away on service.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Bow River): Before the minister replies, I would draw his attention to certain cases I have had described to me in the last few days. There were in fact five of them. I have written to the soldier settlement board concerning these, and with respect to four I have so far received no information. The fifth case the board has turned down flat. The circumstances in that case were somewhat similar to those which have been described by the hon. member for Mackenzie. The man I have in mind has been on the land for the last fifteen or twenty years. I am speaking from memory, but I believe in that time he has had ten crop failures. In 1940 he had a fairly good crop, and he promised the board that he would contribute a certain amount of it as a payment on his land, but since he did not make that 1940 payment, the board is kicking him off his land. From what the director of the soldier settlement board says, they will not do anything else. I do not know what I can do with this fellow. He has two sons in the active service, and it does not seem like a square deal. As I said before, since the last war he has had ten complete crop failures and some partial failures. If this is the reward a man is to get for active service, it is no wonder that we are not getting recruits.

Mr. CRERAR: The administration of soldier settlement matters has had careful consideration, not only by myself but by officials of the department. Undoubtedly there are problems associated with it. I would remind my hon. friends who are now criticizing us, that in the past a great deal of consideration has been given to the soldier settler. On at least two occasions parliament has granted reductions, and further reductions have been made under the Farmers' Creditors Arrangement Act. Quite a considerable number of these settlers have paid their way, and there are others who will pay their way; yet in the very districts in which some have succeeded, there are others who have failed. Those are the ones for whom my hon. friends are making their appeals.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Bow River): Local conditions affect different farmers in different ways.

Mr. CRERAR: Local conditions are taken into account by the department. The hon. member for Mackenzie (Mr. Nicholson) mentioned a case, one in connection with which he has had some correspondence with me. This man is in uniform and his farm, upon which there is no stock or equipment, is being left in the care of his brother. We shall get nothing from it, and we shall probably have to pay