

stated by the Minister of the Interior the other day that he was repeatedly told by parties who met him in the North-West, that one of the reasons why they wanted to have second homesteading done away with, was because people were leaving that section of the country, and it was becoming depopulated from the fact that an Order in Council provided that they should not take up a homestead within forty miles of the first homestead, and that this practically obliged them to remove from that section. I am aware that petitions were presented to the Minister of the Interior, to the effect that homesteaders should be allowed to homestead their pre-emptions on condition of an additional settlement of three years. Now I think that would be just to the settlers. Some sections of the country are not as well settled to day as they were a few years ago, and I think this would have a good effect in securing a settlement of those places, and would be agreeable to the people of the North-West. I will read from the memorial of the North-West Council, clause 13, where they say:

"That settlers who have entered for homestead and pre-emption, and who are now, or may be hereafter, entitled to a patent for their homestead quarter section, be allowed to enter their pre-emption as a second homestead on condition of additional three years homestead duties on their former homestead quarter section, and cultivation duties on the present pre-emption or homestead, as circumstances will permit."

I do not go so far as to allow a man to have the right of free pre-emption on those terms, but I think there could be no objection to allowing a man to enter his pre-emption as a homestead on condition of three years additional residence.

Mr. WHITE (Cardwell). I do not think the hon. gentleman seriously expects Parliament to accept his amendment; I am quite aware that the North-West Council have passed resolutions to this effect, and I am well aware it is popular with the settlers. They would be different from any other people I ever saw if they would not desire to get all they could for nothing, it is the most natural thing in the world. It is presumed that the settler intends to live upon his lands after having taken a homestead, and yet the hon. gentleman proposes that he shall do nothing but remain there for three years more, and, by the simple fact of his being there, he shall escape the payment of his pre-emption altogether. It means converting every homestead into 320 ac. es instead of 160. Even if we were disposed to do this, I do not think it would be an advantage to insist that the extra homestead duties should be made upon the pre-emption quarter section. The man would be the best judge himself of what part of his farm he desired to cultivate, or what part he desired to reserve as pasture land for the cattle he may have; therefore, I do not see that it would be any advantage to him at all. The presumption is that the homesteaders of the North-West intend to remain upon their land and to cultivate as much of it as they can with their means, and, therefore, there is no obligation whatever, in connection with this, imposed especially upon them. It is merely a proposition to give homesteads for nothing, 320 acres instead of 160, on a six years' residence instead of three.

Mr. WATSON. Six years residence is much better than three, as the Minister is aware. Quite a number of settlers have left their homesteads in different parts of the North-West, and also from some parts of Manitoba. I do not suppose they have resided there long enough to receive patents. It is not expected that they shall reside on their homestead and receive a patent for 320 acres after a continued residence of six years; it is supposed to be provided that they shall reside on the pre-emption. I would suppose that very often the original homesteader would sell his original homestead, and would reside upon and cultivate his pre-emption.

Mr. CAMERON (Middlesex). When this Bill was in Committee the other day I stated to the Minister of the Interior that I had received several communications from

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the North-West with reference to it, one coming from a meeting of citizens which had been convened to consider the Dominion Lands Act. I understand that a copy of the proceedings of that meeting was forwarded to the Minister. I have also, since then, received communications from the North-West dealing with the same matter and without expressing an opinion on them myself I propose to lay them before the committee in order that they may receive the consideration they are entitled to. One of the subjects mentioned in a letter I have is that of pre-emption, and it is therein stated:

"Another clause I do not see at all in said Act, is one lowering the price of pre-emption from \$2.50 to \$1.00, as Mr. White, I understood, gave us to understand when he was west; for I can assure you that unless there is a reduction made of some kind, our pre-emptions will be left to the badgers and gophers, as there are very few of us able to pay for said pre-emptions."

Such were the representations made by the chairman of the meeting.

Mr. WHITE (Cardwell). What district is that from?

Mr. CAMERON (Middlesex). From the Moose Jaw district. Although these matters have no particular reference to the clause under discussion, I desire to place these representations before the Minister. The chairman of the meeting further represents that the Minister promised them some consideration in view of the fact that water was exceedingly scarce there. They understood that one of the promises of the Minister was that a well borer would be provided. They also represented in view of the water difficulty that settlers should be allowed to live a greater distance than two miles from their homesteads. I suppose these are exceptional cases, and possibly would justify exceptional treatment. It is also represented that settlers who came into the country since the alteration of the Act, allowing second homesteading, feel considerably aggrieved over the change of policy in that particular. The chairman said that, while he was not entitled himself to the privilege of second homesteading, some of the settlers there were entitled, and it seemed to be depriving them of a right that really belonged to them. I cannot imagine that the number of settlers entitled to that privilege could be very large, because the privilege of second homesteading only existed for a short time. I observe that the Minister is making provisions for special cases under the Act, and perhaps the claims of those settlers would receive special consideration.

Mr. WHITE (Cardwell). I desire to correct the member on one point, and that is, that I made any promises in the North-West to anyone. I made no promises whatever, I was not authorised to do so, and therefore I did not make any. The only point on which I expressed a decided opinion was on the subject of the abolition of second homesteading. As to the price of the pre-emption, I discussed the various suggestions that had been made to me without expressing any opinion of my own or making any promise that a reduction in price would be made to \$1, because I was not authorised to do so, and I could not make any promise without the consent of my colleagues, even if they had the power to make the change, and inasmuch as it would be giving up a debt due to the Crown we could not have done so without the sanction of Parliament itself. As to the promise of a borer, what I said was that there was a borer coming into the territory. It is now at work in the Regina district, and as soon as some progress is made the intention is to move it to the Moose Jaw district, where efforts will be made to obtain water. It is rather remarkable in connection with this water question that borings have been made to a depth of several hundred feet without obtaining water and yet within a very few feet of that point an abundant flow has been struck within fifty or sixty feet of the surface. It is very much a matter of accident as to whether water will be struck at a particular point or not.