

down to 19½ cents a bushel in my territory for No. 1, and the average grade there was No. 4 tough, which netted us 12½ cents a bushel. Some of these people had to sell feed wheat, and in some cases where carload lots were shipped an amount had to be paid to the elevator company to take care of the freight charges, because the wheat, after being shipped to Fort William, did not sell for enough to take care of freight charges, without speaking of threshing and other expenses. The best grade hogs were sold at two cents a pound, eggs at three cents a dozen, butterfat at nine cents a pound. I ask the government, was it possible under those conditions, over which the government had at least some control, for these people to make a living and keep up their payments; and is it right that now, after all these hardships which have been endured, for the government still to insist that these people pay the last pound of flesh, the last dollar?

During the period when we had these low prices for agricultural products, what was happening to machinery prices? So far as I am aware there was only one year when the price of the farm machinery which these people were compelled to pay in order to produce was lowered, and then it was only about \$5 on each implement they had to buy. So that I do not see any reasonableness whatever in compelling these people, who, as I said before, went over and fought so that we may enjoy the liberty we have to-day, being asked to complete their contracts. If they were not able to pay up during the twenty years they have been on the farms, what are the prospects under present conditions of clearing up their debts during the next twenty years? The approximate average age of these men is now, I believe, fifty-four years. Some of them are pretty close to seventy years old, and if we condemn them to another twenty years in the penitentiary, what is the use of their trying to live or eke out an existence? Let us take the humanitarian side of the question into consideration and forget the almighty dollar for once in our lives.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Carried.

Mr. FAIR: There is plenty of time to carry this, Mr. Chairman.

We have waited all through this session until to-day for a chance to place the case of the soldier settler before the house, and if those who are in such a rush to carry this item want to carry it, perhaps they can go home. We can get along very well without them. From April 1, 1941, until March 31, 1943, 253 settlers signed quit-claim deeds and 108 other

settlers were served with thirty-day notices. That means that they had to do certain things within thirty days or get out on the road. I do not know whether hon. members want this state of affairs to continue. Personally I do not, and if it is necessary I will pay more than that dollar in order to free these men and women of their indebtedness. I realize that a number are not able to pay more than that dollar; but the way in which money is being spent, if we take into consideration the millions passed in the estimates yesterday and those which so far have been passed to-day, I think we can slide through one more estimate of \$12,000,000 to take care of this, if that is the amount. I believe it is below that at the present time.

There are to-day hundreds of thousands of men and women overseas. We are going to have a number of them back in the very near future; and before they come back, if we are not going to blush in shame, then I say, let us clean this blot off our books, because it is a blot that cannot be successfully denied.

This matter has been under the same department for some time. I am going to make a suggestion now and I hope it will be agreed to by the house and by the government. I believe we have officials administering the act who, with some sympathetic instructions from the government, would be only too glad to clear up these accounts and sign over the land to those who are still on it. As regards those who have already lost their land; those who have put in years on the land and finally were beaten, as were a number of other farmers, civilians, I would suggest that these men get consideration. But for those still on the land, let me ask that they be given clear title and also that this matter be transferred from the Department of Mines and Resources to the Department of Pensions.

I believe that in the Minister of Pensions and National Health we have a minister who is sympathetic and considerate, and if we have the matter under his department perhaps we shall get better consideration than we are getting from the Minister of Mines and Resources. I am going to make one more suggestion, though perhaps it will not meet with the approval of the government. I say, take the same minister off the treasury board and put on the Minister of Pensions. In my opinion a number of reforms are coming in this country; but while we have men such as the Minister of Mines and Resources, whose record I have followed for a long number of years, ever since he left the farm, we shall not get for these settlers that consideration to which they are entitled. Perhaps some day