

into bankruptcy voluntarily. This question was discussed to a very great extent in the committee which dealt with amendments to the Bankruptcy Act in a previous session, and at that time many representations were made by the farmers in support of maintaining their present position. I trust that in the forthcoming legislation the farmers will maintain that position of freedom from the compulsory features of the Bankruptcy Act.

I may point out something which again the Prime Minister is no doubt very familiar with, and that is that the various debt adjustment acts and other protective acts of the western provinces have been based upon the fact that the creditor cannot force the farmer into liquidation. Were that protection removed and did the farmer come under the full provisions of the Bankruptcy Act, it would at once nullify all of those debt adjustment acts and various other protective measures which have been passed by the several provinces. Personally I cannot see that it is necessary that they should come under the Bankruptcy Act, and I trust that when this legislation is before the committee, that fact will be made abundantly clear.

Mr. BENNETT: Obviously the terms of the proposed legislation are not subject to discussion, but I gather entirely the point which the hon. gentleman has made. I suppose he knows that the legal advisers of all the western provinces are aware of the doubtful validity of what are called the debt adjustment acts, but that of course does not touch in any sense the validity of the statutes that provide for the cessation of court proceedings, moratoria, and so forth. It does not touch those because their validity is admitted. But the matter of which the hon. gentleman speaks is dealt with in the bill, and I quite appreciate his point.

Mr. SPEAKMAN: I merely raised the point in order that the Prime Minister would have it in mind when the legislation is brought down. I also appreciate the fact that there has always been a question as to the validity of the debt adjustment acts under provincial jurisdiction in relation to the powers of the federal parliament with respect to the Bankruptcy Act.

Mr. NEILL: I would like to ask two questions, and if the Prime Minister has already answered one before six o'clock I am sorry. I refer for a moment to the buildings that were erected under the Housing Act. These undertakings took place right after the war when prices were at their very highest both

as regards the inflated value of lands and houses and of the material with which to build houses. They were concurrent, so to speak, with the same conditions that obtained under the Soldier Settlement Act when soldiers bought land and stock at inflated prices. The government in their wisdom years afterwards saw fit to have a revaluation of those lands whereby the settlers obtained very substantial reductions running as high as fifty per cent in some cases. The interest was also rebated from time to time. A very large rebate was made to the soldier settlers, and those who came under the Housing Act felt that they had been unfairly treated inasmuch as the claims for consideration were met by the government only as regards farm lands and not as to houses for homes. The house owners got no rebate whatever because they were told that the money was loaned by the dominion to the provinces, and by the provinces to the municipalities, and that there was no responsibility on the dominion. As far as I know that is the position to-day. But I understood the Prime Minister to say that there had been, not adjustments perhaps, but consideration given in cases where the provinces had extended generosity—I think that was the word used—

Mr. BENNETT: Generous treatment.

Mr. NEILL: Yes, that in such cases the dominion had done the same by the provinces. I would like to ask in that connection, was it in regard merely to the extension of the ultimate debt, which would still remain a debt, or was there any rebate made of principal or interest as was done in the case of the soldier settlers?

Mr. BENNETT: In reply to the hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Neill) I can only say that thus far, so far as my memory goes, there has been no rebate (a) of principal, or (b) of interest. All that has been done is to extend the time of payment to the same extent as the time for payment has been extended by the borrowing province to the borrowing builder.

Mr. NEILL: The only other question I wanted to ask is this: What is the minimum qualification, so to speak, to qualify as a farmer under this legislation? We generally think of farms as being 160 or 320 acres. But what about the little man with five or ten acres, a few cows, some poultry and garden produce? Will he qualify?

Mr. BENNETT: The hon. gentleman has raised a question to which I propose to ask the committee to give its best judgment. At