

Mr. J. H. SINCLAIR: Do you do it under the Interior Department, or the Public Works?

Mr. MEIGHEN: Under the Interior Department. The lands are themselves under the administration of the Interior Department. The Crown Lands of the Dominion, which are administered in the Interior Department, are the lands that are mainly to be affected by the work.

Mr. J. H. SINCLAIR: Does the hon. minister expect the work to be confined to these two provinces?

Mr. MEIGHEN: We cannot operate anywhere else, but there is a clause in the Act providing for the extension of the work should any other province pass an Act under which we could come in.

Mr. J. H. SINCLAIR: I would like the minister to outline what he proposes to do under this Act, and what expenditure he thinks the Government will find it necessary to make. It is a new venture, and at a time like this, when it is difficult to find funds to run the ordinary business of the country, it strikes me that it is hardly a proper time to embark on this project unless it can be shown that there is some good reason for it. There is a reference here to the fact that the land may be turned over to the Soldiers' Settlement Board, but I do not think the soldiers will agree to settle in these low swampy places. We would therefore like to know what the hon. minister intends to do, and how much he expects to spend under this Act.

Mr. MEIGHEN: The minister has no very pretentious plans on foot. The United States Government has launched a programme of reclamation along this line involving an expenditure of \$100,000,000. What we do contemplate in the Interior Department is what you might describe as an experimental undertaking, at all events, an initial undertaking. What we have in mind is the reclamation of Waterhen lake. If we go ahead with that first, it will require about \$120,000. Something in the neighbourhood of 12,000 acres will be reclaimed—land that at present, I understand, is absolutely valueless; not only valueless in itself, but its remaining in its present condition impairs the whole district and renders less valuable much land in the neighbourhood. That project is recommended to us by

5 p.m. our engineers as perhaps the one we should undertake first. The

lands adjacent to the lands that would be

reclaimed are worth to-day from \$30 to \$50 an acre, and there is no reason to believe that these would not be worth the same, not immediately after reclamation, possibly, but shortly after.

Mr. J. H. SINCLAIR: Would it not be better to submit to the Provincial Act and pay in proportion the amount required to drain these lands? I understand the Provincial Act applies to all lands where drainage is required and operations are started under the Provincial Act, it would be better for the Dominion Government holding lands in that area to submit to the jurisdiction of the province, and pay their share of the lands they own.

Mr. MEIGHEN: That alternative was very carefully considered. In it is involved the question of the jurisdiction of the province to tax Dominion lands; indeed, not only the question of jurisdiction but of the wisdom of submitting to taxation at the hands of the provinces; and it was deemed best to solve the difficulty in another way. In cases where the bulk of the land is privately owned, or in cases where the province wants work done for the sake of roads, then the province or the local authorities undertake it, and if we have land within the area affected we have arranged to sell that land to the province, at a certain fixed rate, and the province, after the land is reclaimed sells by public auction, and out of the proceeds of the sale the cost of reclamation is first taken. Over and above that, the surplus comes back to the Dominion. Where we have a great body of lands the province takes the ground that the work is ours, and, we think, properly so. We undertake the work, the provincial legislation provides provincial officers, assesses the proper share against private lands, and we just pay our share; and upon the sale of that land we are recouped for the expenditure we make. Of course, as respects our own land the surplus is ours.

Mr. J. H. SINCLAIR: Is it the intention of the Government to turn these lands over to the province before the next election?

Mr. MEIGHEN: I did not really think that the hon. member was thinking of the next election. I have not yet given it a thought at all, and I am afraid it would take me some time to come to a conclusion on that point.

Section agreed to.