

The CHAIRMAN: Excuse me, Mr. Blackmore, but that matter was discussed yesterday.

Mr. BLACKMORE: I just want to review it.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you have to review it? There are a number of members who would like to ask Mr. Bickerton some questions that will not be a review.

Mr. BLACKMORE: That is all right. I did not ask a question of him at all yesterday. I think this is very important. I am a westerner and I am asking questions of western farmers; and I do not think there is anything idle being raised.

*By Mr. Kinley:*

Q. May I ask a question? Was that 3½ per cent determined on whether you borrowed the whole value of the farm or just a small loan?—A. No. That was really applied to the amount of mortgage debt that could be carried by a farmer. It was not a matter of a short-term loan. It was a matter of the debt load that could be carried.

Q. The debt load would depend upon the amount of the mortgage, too, you know?—A. Well, to some extent; yes.

Q. Yes; to every extent, practically.—A. They had a complete table of the thing. I remember seeing it. They set out that a farmer who had above the average quality of land could carry a little higher load of debt and pay a little higher rate of interest; but it was all relative as to this debt load and the interest amount that could be paid.

Q. You do not think that a farmer could borrow money, buy a farm and succeed, do you?—A. He would have a heck of a time.

Q. Yes. I do not think he could.—A. That is, taking a chap who is just entering into a venture. You know, this is something that has me somewhat worried in regard to the soldier settler. It has me quite worried.

Mr. BLACKMORE: It has me, too.

The WITNESS: Yes. He immediately assumes the responsibility of debt.

Mr. KINLEY: Surely.

The WITNESS: I really am worried about it going back into some of the records, not particularly with respect to the soldier settlers of the past, because I think they are precipitated into an impossible position at the very beginning; but thinking back over the records of the farming community in general, and the trouble that they have had with debt and all of that kind, I worry about it. I was talking to a man who is the supervisor of pure bred milk cattle, and this is what he is finding out. Some of the men who have been saddled with the responsibility of debt that was incurred by their fathers and possibly their grandfathers—and I am thinking of people in the east here—are younger men, and they have come to the conclusion that they will dispose of their dairy herds, try to clean off the debt and take a chance on what they can do in regard to building up again; in other words, cleaning it off, selling the stock, because the stock is at a good price, get the money, clean the debt off and then try to make a fresh start.

*By Mr. Kinley:*

Q. Make a fresh start with a new deal?—A. With a clean bill.

Q. Yes.—A. It is worrying, because what becomes of these dairy cattle? It is a worrying thing.

Q. You can quite see how easy money might destroy the farm economy?—A. Yes.

*By Mr. Blackmore:*

Q. The next question I want to ask is this. We did not exactly settle on this interest rate that your people would favour. Would the majority of the