

to take their losses. The district did not open up as expected, but it is to be hoped that subsequently it will revive, as I personally think it will.

Similar occurrences took place on the east shore to a degree, I cannot doubt it, after hearing the words of the hon. member for Selkirk. In a word, wherever new territory was invaded the results were by no means satisfactory. The board would have done better if it had confined its operations more rigidly to well settled districts. However, this minor cause or reason for revaluation may be dismissed with those few words. I do not think it applies very far, and wherever it does apply, though it is true that the soldier acquiesced, and that in the main he knew the values just about as well as anyone else, still the board did adopt a sort of relationship of trustee for the soldier. It was not a specific legal trusteeship, but the board acted in a measure as his guardian, and I would think that wherever there was a case of overvaluation as contrasted with the actual value at the time, there should be now some reparation made, to the full extent of the overvaluation.

Of course, were the cases confined to those our problem would be very simple—the number would be negligible as compared with the total. Unfortunately, the entire enterprise has run against difficulties infinitely more complicated and serious. In one sentence the difficulties are due to depreciation of farm lands. This depreciation, I should say, commenced about the middle of 1921 and was more marked over the western provinces, and naturally so, than over any other part of Canada for the reason that it was there the great bulk of the system was in operation. It was in the western provinces that the soldier settlement venture encountered a great share of its difficulties. What the depreciation has been it is not possible to fix, and even if it were the average would not apply everywhere. The question comes: Should we attack the problem of seeking to restore to the soldier his loss through depreciation? Ordinarily a purchaser would have no such right. The civil purchaser outside the soldier has no such right; he must take his chances of a fall in values as he takes his chances of a profit on the rise. But even aside from the special claims of the soldier, in the ordinary affairs of men the vendor very frequently has to bear a share of the loss caused by depreciation of the land he sold. I do not doubt that it is a very general practice throughout western Canada today, possibly extending into the eastern prov-

inces, that vendors of land make new arrangements with the purchasers—make them simply for the reason that it is the best thing they can do. The only other alternative is to lose that purchaser and take chances of a resale later on. Consequently, in the interests of the vendor, they deem it wisdom to adopt the principle of revaluation such as this bill seeks to adopt here. When we add to these reasons the special claims which we always recognize the soldier to possess I do not think very much of a case can be made against revaluation.

Then we are immediately faced with the question: How is the revaluation to be effected? This is a most difficult and complicated, if not baffling, one. One parliament, during four sessions, because of the difficulties in the way, was unable to come to any conclusion or recommendation. The difficulties, of course, are manifest. There is the utter impossibility of being fair to all the soldiers. I do not like to see any principle applied that is not fair to all the soldiers, in fact I am very apprehensive of the difficulties we are going to encounter later in starting revaluation at all, simply because it is utterly beyond human compass to extend it to all alike. Possibly, though, the exigencies are such that even that objection must be cast aside; we have to try to do the best we can.

Now, the minister has laid before the committee a scheme which I am afraid is not very mature, which is the most vulnerable I think of anything that has yet come from his mind. Indeed, if it were not the Minister of the Interior but any other member of the government who was presenting this plan I would be inclined to move first of all to change the title, and I would head the bill something like this: An Act to coerce soldier settlers into voting for the government, and to replenish the campaign funds of the party. I am not attributing these purposes to the minister, I know how innocent he is politically, but if he had intended such a plan designedly he could not be more open to the charge.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): I know my right hon. friend is unduly suspicious but I should like him to explain where he sees any chance for political capital or campaign funds in this bill.

Mr. MEIGHEN: The minister might expect the answer much more readily and would, perhaps, get it more fully, if he would consult the hon. member for Athabaska (Mr. Cross). It he did that I am sure the hon.