

it must be borne in mind that the old soldier settlers have had a great deal of their indebtedness reduced or written off from time to time. In the majority of cases they have had the benefit of coming under the Farmers' Creditors Arrangement Act and have had their obligations adjusted under that scheme. I am quite willing to give my hon. friend the assurance that the government will consider the whole matter carefully. I shall see that it is brought to the attention of the government, and we will approach the matter as sympathetically as we can.

Mr. QUELCH: What will be the basis of the equity which will be applied to these soldier settlers?

Mr. CRERAR: I would not care to make a promise with regard to the equity in the land. If I recall aright, the committee recommended that the government consider the practicability of that. My hon. friend knows as well as I do that there are practical difficulties in the way. It might result in injustices. A soldier settler who has met his obligations, who has secured title to his property or is in the way of shortly securing title because he can clear off his indebtedness, might feel he was being discriminated against if his neighbour, a soldier settler also, who had not been as attentive to his duties as he should have been and thereby had failed to make the headway he otherwise would have made, is legislated into an equity. These questions have to be considered. It is an easy matter in a spirit of generosity to say that these things should be done, but the practical aspects of the questions must be considered in all their bearings. All I can say to my hon. friend is that that will be done.

Mr. WRIGHT: I do not think we should let this matter pass as easily as that. Many of these men have been working for twenty-two years on their farms. As the hon. member for Acadia (Mr. Quelch) has said, there are some 2,700 who have no equity in their land. Many of these men are up in years, being from fifty to seventy years of age. The special committee heard representations from the legion, from some individuals and from certain groups of these soldiers, and I think it was agreed by the majority that there should be some equity given to these men. They have spent many years of their lives on these farms. Of those who have not been able to make good, 85 per cent are located in the western provinces where drought conditions have been the cause of their failure. I should like to put on the record some of the things

[Mr. Crerar.]

these soldiers have had to contend with. I have in my hand a letter from one man which states:

In 1929 I was hailed out complete, not enough left for seed next year. In 1931 I had a fair crop. I turned over a carload of wheat, 1,020 bushels to the soldier settlement board inspector, who advised holding until the price was better. I received a credit for \$69 for that carload of wheat. The price had struck the bottom. Then came years of drought, grasshoppers, cutworms, and low prices, when no person could make more than a living. In the fall of 1937 the S.S. board inspector advised me, as I had had so much bad luck to apply the Farmers' Creditors Arrangement Act, and that I should get at least my debt cut in half, as others had claimed. I fell for this, as others had. I got a \$220 reduction, and they got the security of a half-section of land instead of a quarter-section as before.

In 1938, realizing I had been taken like a sucker, I made a determined effort to get clear. I put in every acre that I had broke in wheat, 270 acres, and the gods smiled and it rained and shined and I had a beautiful crop and just before cutting time it hailed. In nine minutes I was cleaned out, not even seed again. Now at 57 my health is gone, two major operations in two years. Can there be a "Jinks" on returned soldiers?

I have a further letter from the same man, written in April of this year, stating that the soldier settlement board's supervisor—

. . . called on me last week and told me my health was in no condition to carry on farming and that if I would rent the land to a neighbour for cropping and turn my share over to the S.S.B. they would see I got the burnt-out soldiers allowance. I am only 57 years old and have rented the land except buildings and pasture to a neighbour and assigned my share over to the S.S.B. If I am unable to get this allowance what can I do. It seems to me the government pays out more money to the pension board to stop us fellows from getting a deserved pension than would put us worn-out veterans on pension. I borrowed \$3,000 on my land when I returned from overseas and still owe \$2,600, but the land has increased from 160 acres to 320 also from bald prairie to a going concern, buildings \$1,500, 220 acres under cultivation, fenced and cross-fenced, and yet they say I have no equity in the land. . . .

This man has a son in the army and states:

If he is lucky enough to get back I would like to turn my interest in this land over to my son.

That simply illustrates the conditions these men have to work under. Yet when the legion recommended that they be given an equity in their land; when a committee of this house made the same recommendation, and when the minister himself stated that he thought that was a reasonable request, the director of the soldier settlement board, in making his recommendation to the special committee, insisted that he did not think these men should be given any equity in their