

ceeded to operate the lands allocated to them. But the council, or a portion of it at least, is opposed to the use of any of the Indian lands for the purposes of soldier settlement, and to the soldiers operating on the reserves under the provisions of the Soldier Settlement Act. I am not aware of the reasons for this, except that they feel that some of their rights are being jeopardized. In this particular case they have opposed by force any attempts on the part of Hill to take possession.

Mr. MEIGHEN: In referring to the council, does the minister mean the council of the band?

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): Yes. In this case it is hereditary; it is not elective. The difficulty has come to the point where legal action has been taken and Hill's ownership has been sustained in the court. But still the band have resisted. The sheriff a few days ago undertook to oust the incumbent and place Hill upon the land, but he was resisted by force; and matters have come to such a pass now that he asks for assistance to enable him to carry out his duties in this connection. Throughout the whole affair I have endeavoured to avoid difficulties. We have had representatives of the council here on two occasions. The member for Brantford (Mr. Raymond) and the member for Brant (Mr. Good) met the members of the Council, I believe, or at least the chiefs of the band, to discuss the matter, but they did not seem willing to permit the operation of the Soldiers' Settlement Act on the reserve their intention being apparently, to resist this, if need be, by force. It is very difficult in a case of this kind to avoid what may develop into a serious situation, but personally I feel that we have a duty to stand behind the men who were willing, in the face of serious danger, to don the khaki and fight for us; it is our business as a department and a government to stand behind them. But we must also endeavour as far as possible to avoid any serious difficulty with the wards of the nation. At the moment the matter is in the hands of the sheriff of the county and the Attorney General of the province of Ontario. I do not know that I can say anything more on the matter. There are one or two things that might be said in regard to the desirability, if it were possible, of changing the system of the election of the council. But, again, these Indians stand very strongly upon their rights, and a conciliatory

[Mr. Charles Stewart.]

method would be the best if it could be effected. At any rate it should be tried to the limit before drastic steps are taken. I do think, however, that we must protect the men who were loyal enough, and who had our interests sufficiently at heart, to get out and fight for their country.

Mr. LEWIS: Just two questions: Does this Government recognize the council of which the minister has been speaking? And does the council claim the improvements made on the land by the Soldier Settlement Board, or just the land?

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): They have not made any claim. They are resisting the method that is being pursued in dealing with the lands in their reserves. It is the land in every case that they are claiming.

Mr. LEWIS: But there are improvements?

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): Yes.

Mr. GOOD: Perhaps I might supplement the statement of the minister by describing briefly the interview which my hon. friend (Mr. Raymond) and I had with a number of the chiefs the other day. The chairman of the council stood definitely and firmly by this position, that they were not subject to Canadian laws within the territory of their reserve. He said that the Canadian people, acting through the Canadian Government, were invaders of their rights as an independent people and an ally of the British Crown. That is perhaps a rather unique position, but they have taken it very definitely and it lies behind the difficulty which the minister has referred to.

Mr. MEIGHEN: I do not wish to enter into a discussion of the particular matter concerning the Six Nations reserve, save to make this comment. I think the minister is not quite correct in saying that the Soldier Settlement Board operates the Indian reserves, treating the Indian returned soldier just as they have power to treat the white returned soldier. My recollection is that the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs was given the powers of the Soldier Settlement Board in respect of the Indian returned men, and he is enabled to operate the Act in regard to them. But the Soldier Settlement Board, as such, does not interpose itself at all. That, I am quite certain, is right, because the Soldier Settlement Board could not act, in view of the fact that the Indian, whether