

Government has. I do not believe it is a right principle, and it is much less a proper national policy, for permission to be given to great corporations to hold large blocks of land in the hope that some neighbours or some enterprising men who may come into the community will develop and improve the land and so enhance to an unnatural value their own corporate holdings. When you go to these corporations and ask them to put a price upon their land, I would suggest that this proviso be made, namely, that the price which they shall place upon their land, the price at which they hold it, shall be the price which will determine the basis of their taxation for time to come, so that they will bear their full share of financial responsibility in the community. At this period, we should say to the people who are holding valuable land in this country: You must either work or pay. I recognize the right which men holding land have to their so-called vested interests, but it is not in the interest of our country at the present time to permit vast areas of arable land to remain untilled, while the value thereof is enhanced by hard working men who in adjoining districts do their duty as citizens.

There is in our province another source of supply from which the Government may draw. A year ago I took the opportunity of calling the attention of the House to the fact that in my constituency there was a considerable number of Indian Reserves and that possibly these might in places furnish suitable homes for settlers, whether returned soldiers or other white men, in the future. In order to set this matter clearly before the House, let me say that between the town of Hope and the western end of my constituency, an area covering some seventy-five miles in length by thirty or forty miles in width, there are some fourteen bands of Indians. These are placed on seventy-two reserves, according to the last returns a total population of 1,216 people. The land reserved for these bands of Indians comprises 19,247 acres. I do not think that, so far, any exception can be taken to the extent of the reserves for these natives. This country has always sought to deal justly by the Indian, the native of this country, and my suggestion to the Government is in no wise intended to prove unfair or disadvantageous or unjust to the Indians. There is, however, one other reserve within the bounds of my constituency, in the very heart of the Fraser valley, through which the Canadian Pacific passes, between the stations of Ruby Creek and Agassiz.

[Mr. Stacey.]

This island is known as Seabird Island and contains some 4,500 acres of what I do not hesitate to call the very choicest land in the province of British Columbia. That may seem a strong statement, but I think investigation and reports will prove its accuracy. On that island there are reported to be 121 Indians all told, who cultivate a total of 132.5 acres, leaving considerably over 4,000 acres of land untouched. I am of the opinion that not only is that a national loss from the standpoint of production, but it is a bad education for the native. It is not good policy that he should be permitted to hold the view that all that land is at his disposal, when it is not in any sense of the word contributing to his sustenance. It is not cultivated ground. He does not cultivate it. The finest land in the valley is still untouched. I hope the department or the Government will take into consideration the advisability of making such provision as they can for returned men to enter at least upon this island. If they do not desire to enter upon it, then I would say: Open it up for the entry of white people. Let the land be used so that it may be a source of production to the people of this country and especially to British Columbia. This is in no sense of the term a reflection upon the labour or interest or the future of the Indians. We must look after them, but I claim that this is not at all inimical to their interest, future or welfare.

I want also to draw the attention of the Government very earnestly to a sympathetic consideration of a matter that is akin to that which was presented by the hon. member for East York (Mr. Foster) this afternoon. I shall not attempt to refer to anything to which he drew the attention of the House further than to remark that my subject has reference to the same department, and I shall put it very briefly.

We have in our country rural mail carriers and rural postmasters who are very much underpaid. These men are doing the business of the country, so far as their duties require and the stipulations of the Government demand, and they are doing it faithfully and to the satisfaction of the department, or they would not be retained. But their remuneration is altogether inadequate to the services rendered, and I am speaking now with sole reference to the two classes I have mentioned. The resort of other labourers in such a situation is not within the range of their activity; they cannot strike; they must continue, and do continue, their labours. I almost hesitate to state to this House the financial con-