

*Supply—Soldier Land Settlement*

munications from many municipalities which claim that no taxes are paid on those leased lands, to the detriment of the school districts and the municipalities themselves. Is there any reason why there should be a different policy in one district from that in another?

Mr. FORKE: From now on the matter will be looked into.

Mr. WARD: Is it the intention of the Soldier Settlement Board or the government to pay taxes on soldier settlement land that has reverted to the crown? Is it the intention to reimburse the municipalities in any way for the loss of those taxes?

Mr. FORKE: In connection with lands that have been abandoned, the department has always paid all taxes up to the time that the settler abandoned the land. The department has recognized the fact that it has to pay those taxes in any case and perhaps it will be better for the municipalities to see that they are paid every year up to date, because it is realized that so long as the man is on the land we shall have to pay the taxes anyway. We have just dealt with cases where lands have been rented. As regards lands that have reverted to the crown and are yet unsettled, the policy of the department is to sell those lands as rapidly as possible. The representatives of the municipalities were so well satisfied with the arrangement we made with regard to future taxes on those lands that they were not pressing that point very much if we undertook as a matter of policy to dispose of those lands as rapidly as we could. Unfortunately some of these lands in Manitoba are not very good. I have not discussed the matter so far, but my private opinion would be that I would be quite willing to hand over some of these lands and let the municipalities have them for the taxes.

Mr. GARDINER: Is that land of no agricultural value? I understand the department has two thousand farms of that nature. Has the department any policy in the matter?

Mr. FORKE: We discussed that matter with the delegates of the municipalities, and although we did not formulate any policy, perhaps in the near future we shall have a thorough survey made of all lands in possession of the crown, and those that we do not think are fit for agricultural purposes, I think I may safely say, will be handed over to the municipalities if they are willing to take them.

[Mr. Gardiner.]

Mr. GARDINER: From time to time certain contracts to returned soldiers are cancelled. No doubt many of these contracts have had to be cancelled because of the fact that in the first instance the cost of the land was too high. In view of the fact that the revaluation bill has passed both houses of parliament, would the minister take into consideration the possibility of delaying any cancellation of contract until such time as there is a possibility of having a revaluation of these lands merely to give these men some chance of staying on the land, rather than turning them off the land at this time?

Mr. FORKE: I will read the instructions sent to the general supervisor, as follows:

The general situation and the board's instructions are exactly as I gave them in my wire, that foreclosure is not to be adopted where there is any possible hope of most generous revaluation rehabilitating a man, but where his position is utterly hopeless then, of course, we do not see how we should, in the interests of the man himself, forego taking action that is essential.

Mr. GARDINER: It might be all right if that were determined by the proper officer, but you have in the employment of this board men who probably do not understand the conditions as fairly as they might understand them. I suggest therefore that instead of leaving it wholly and solely to the recommendation of the supervisor or the district superintendent, for the time being and until we see what revaluation will do for these men, cancellation of contract should be discontinued, so long as the soldier is willing to stay on the land.

Mr. PARENT: My hon. friend might have said all that when the budget was on.

Mr. GARDINER: I did not take up that subject, and if I wish to make any remarks now I will do so. If we are given a fair opportunity for discussion we will put the estimates through. I suggest that under the circumstances, taking into consideration what these men have passed through and the possibility of giving them some redress through revaluation, you adopt the policy which will give the best possible consideration to the men.

I spoke this afternoon about the situation in this regard. I have had communications from returned men who have been accepted by the board as being entitled to farms when they qualify. I do not know how many of these men still require farms, but there are some. In view of the agreement entered into between this government and the British