

the rush of settlers to the offices of the board has passed all anticipation and continues still with unabated vigour. In every office in Western Canada the officials are working day and night, and in one office alone the number of callers in a single day was 800.

Mr. MORPHY: To what does the minister attribute the fact that ninety of the returned soldiers have abandoned the land.

Mr. MEIGHEN: The percentage is a very small one and it shows that in the main when these men visited the land they found it was not such as they had expected. Possibly their first inspection of the land when they entered for it was too hurried; and more likely the men who abandoned entered by proxy—some one entered for them, as can be done under the Dominion Lands Act. Then when the actual settler went there he found that the land did not suit him. A third explanation would be that in the meantime he found some other land suited him better and he decided to take it instead. In that connection we have arranged that where a soldier, who has previously made a homestead entry, makes a soldier entry, he is at liberty to abandon his homestead and get credit for the duties he has already performed upon it, and take up a homestead near his soldier entry and be, as regards the new homestead, in the same position in which he was when he left the old one. Under the various district superintendents, there are expert inspectors and valuers of land. These men have been selected with the greatest care we could exercise, and their duty is one of the most responsible that falls to the lot of any of our officials.

It is their business to inspect and value the land, and wherever they find that the soldier has elected to purchase land at a certain price, they, after examination, determine whether the land is fit for the purpose, that is, is good agricultural land, and the price is not unreasonable. If they deem the price unreasonable, it is their business to advise the soldier that he will not be recommended for the assistance that the Act provides, unless that land is sold to him at a less figure. As a consequence—and the statistics that can be placed upon Hansard if it is desired—very large sums indeed have been saved to soldiers from the prices at which they were ready to buy their land—amounts running all the way from \$100 to \$2,000, and even above that sum.

Mr. MORPHY: Must every purchase come before the advisory board before the soldier can complete the transaction?

[Mr. Meighen.]

Mr. MEIGHEN: Yes. Of course, we do not say to a soldier: You cannot buy the land yourself if you wish. He is a citizen with the same rights as other citizens. But we warn him that in buying without the approval of the advisory council he is not certain to obtain the assistance that the Act provides, because the money will not be advanced against his purchase except on their approval. This is the routine followed. The soldier selects his land. That land is then inspected by one of our appraisers, and after the price is brought to a level that is deemed to be fair and just,—at a level that, having regard to the value, the soldier can earn a living upon the land by reasonable application, the board buys the land and takes title to it, and then enters into an agreement for sale to the soldier, who pays down at least 10 per cent of the price,—sufficient in any event to reduce the balance owing to a maximum of \$4,500.

It is somewhat difficult to decide what is the best order in which to take this up, but I think I had now better state the number of entries that have been made, the commitments, the Government supervision throughout, and the conditions in which the work now is. Up to the 14th of this month the number of applications before our qualification committees by returned soldiers for the benefits of the Act was 17,450. The number that had actually been passed upon was 14,726. The number that had actually been passed as qualified was 12,594. The classification is in three divisions. Class A are the men who have done nothing but farm most of their lives,—perhaps hired on farms, but at all events have done nothing but farm, and who from all that can be learned from the record of their habits and character are men who in all reasonable certainty are going to succeed as farmers. Of those 12,594, 6,176 are in class A; 3,494 are in class B, who also have had experience in farming, although that has not been their sole occupation; 2,924 are in class C, which comprises those who are on a lower scale and are recommended for the special care and supervision of the supervisors under the board after they get on the land.

Coming to the financial aspect of the work—

Mr. McKENZIE: Before the minister leaves that, could he give us information as to where those men are located in the different provinces?

Mr. MEIGHEN: Yes, I can give it province by province. British Columbia, 1,894; Alberta, 3,438; Saskatchewan, 2,025; Mani-