

settlers will be forced to evacuate in the near future owing to dispossession being made of their property. I have already suggested to the minister that no action should be taken in this regard until next spring. I notice an item in an Ottawa paper advising men not to go to Calgary as there are at present 2,000 unemployed in that city. Under such conditions as these, I would suggest that if possible no foreclosures should take place until next spring. If a family is forced off the land they will go into the bread line and some public body will have to support them, and I think the minister will agree with me that the outside cost to the government of carrying these people, even though they may be hopelessly behind in their payments, would not be a very large item. It would be the cheapest and best way of keeping them in decency and in some comfort for the balance of the year. I think the minister sympathizes with me in this regard. No matter how far behind they may be in their payments, I suggest that it would be good business to allow them to remain until next spring.

Owing to the present conditions which exist in connection with immigration and colonization, we may expect some reorganization in connection with this department as well as in connection with the land settlement board. I think the minister will agree and the house will appreciate that even with reorganization a certain number of men will be required to carry on the work. At the present time there are some hundreds of men working under the board. They are all returned men and have been in the service of the board for some ten or twelve years. Like all the rest of us they are not getting any younger, and possibly they have become unfitted for other forms of work and would find it extremely difficult to find employment. I would suggest that when the irreducible minimum has been reached the men who are left should be placed in a permanent position, and no matter under what department this matter may be placed, or what methods are adopted, as far as possible the men who are to do the work shall be those at present performing these duties. This would be only a measure of reestablishment for returned men, and would be only fair to those who have worked faithfully for ten or twelve years. I would ask the minister to give the assurance to those men and to the committee that as far as possible the personnel in the west that may be necessary to carry on this work and work of a similar character, under whatever department it may come, shall be the personnel at present engaged

[Mr. Speakman.]

who have fitted themselves for the jobs. That would be an assurance which would be appreciated by the house and the country as a whole.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): So far as my influence goes, as regards whatever readjustments may be necessary—because that is all that I can conceive will happen—we will seek to place the men, if they are not required in that service, in some other branch of the government. If that is not possible, of course some very reasonable consideration should be given them. I am speaking not only of the Soldier Settlement Board, but the Immigration department and the Department of the Interior, and I have notified the Civil Service Commission that positions should be filled by men and women who may find themselves out of employment in these various branches that are to be reduced. In that way we hope to absorb many of the employees who will suffer on account of reductions of staff. As regards the Soldier Settlement Board personnel, undoubtedly they are best fitted for carrying on and will carry on the work in the future as they have done in the past, except as they are surplus, and the latter we shall seek to absorb in the other branches.

Mr. CAMPBELL: As regards the question raised by the hon. member for Camrose, that is a case in which the government can say it has no legal liability. Certainly that is so, but on the other hand, the government is under a distinct moral obligation. The minister pointed out that the board has no authority to pay out money for any such purpose, and he seemed to dismiss the matter with that statement. May I remind the minister that whenever the government want to grant gratuities to particular persons, especially pensions of some kind to deal with compassionate cases, provision for such cases is made every year in the estimates. There are in the estimates at the present time items that are not covered by any legislation; that are purely compassionate cases. We are granting pensions to widows on compassionate grounds. This is in the instance under consideration a distinct claim on compassionate grounds, and there is nothing in the world to prevent the government from bringing down a small sum in the estimates to cover the \$480 which is morally due to this man.

Item agreed to.