

we find that they are the victims of an agricultural policy or lack of policy which has been in effect under the various governments.

Saskatchewan took the lead last April, and their settlers held a conference at Saskatoon on April 9. They were convinced that they could not make things go; they were not satisfied with their treatment. I shall read some of the resolutions which were passed at this conference. They are four in number, not very long, but rather effective. The first one is:

That we request all soldier settlers to withhold their applications for reduction and amortization under order in council P.C. 10472 and submit instead to the office of the Minister of Mines and Resources (Hon. T. A. Crerar), the following resolution:

"Whereas the majority of soldier settlers, although handicapped by poor crops and low prices, have already paid more than their land is worth to-day, they should now be relieved of their responsibility by the government."

I might say that these resolutions were forwarded to the Minister of Mines and Resources. Here is his answer, under date May 3, to resolution No. 1:

The essence of resolution No. 1 is that soldier settlers be given title to the lands covered by their contracts with the director of soldier settlement, the principle of which is that the Canadian taxpayers should single out a very small fraction of the total number of veterans of the last war for such treatment. Such a policy does not commend itself to the dominion government.

Resolution No. 2:

Whereas it has come to our notice that by order in council the soldier settlement board has been permitted to order deductions made from the pay and allowances of dependents of men now serving in the armed forces, to be applied against land and taxes.

Therefore we demand that the above order in council be rescinded immediately, and that any sums of money already so deducted be refunded.

The reply to that is :

With regard to resolution No. 2, no unfair deductions have been made from the assigned pay and allowance payable to dependents of members of the active service forces. At the present time there are 1,128 persons in the active forces whose dependents or representatives continue to occupy the lands which are under purchase contract from the director of soldier settlement. Of these, 279 have made voluntary assignments of amounts sufficient to meet the terms of their agreements, and in quite a number of cases of amounts which will accelerate payment for their farms. Eight hundred and four made no assignments but their agreements are nevertheless being met. In only 45 cases throughout the dominion are deductions in effect under the order in council to which you refer, but as an offset to such deductions the dependents concerned have the use of the farm and the revenue therefrom.

Resolution No. 3:

That this mass meeting of soldier settlers is opposed to any land settlement scheme for men of the armed forces serving in the present war and instead favours payment of an outright cash bonus to these men instead of saddling them with debt and interest charges.

The minister replies:

Regarding resolution No. 3, it is a matter of record that approximately 60,000 men now serving with the active forces have expressed a preference for land settlement upon their return to civil life. The Veterans' Land Act 1942 contains provision for a substantial grant to the settler upon the fulfilment of reasonable conditions. This seems to be an effective answer to the views expressed by your relatively small group at Saskatoon.

Might I pause here for a moment to comment that, unless an agricultural policy is made effective in this country which will guarantee cost of production to soldier settlers and other agriculturists, the men under the Veterans' Land Act must necessarily go on the rocks. I urge that precautions be taken now to put such an agricultural policy into effect.

Resolution No. 4:

That we condemn the threatening attitude adopted by officials of the soldier settlement board in collection of payments from soldier settlers.

This is the minister's reply:

Resolution No. 4 relates to collection policy, and I am reluctant to believe that threatening tactics are being resorted to in cases where there is inability to pay which results from factors beyond the control of the settlers concerned. In credit operations there are always a few cases where firmness is required in making collections, and in fairness to those who meet their obligations fully and on time the director of soldier settlement insists upon payment by those who are inclined to pay scant attention to their principal creditor.

In conclusion, I wish to observe that resolutions of this character are most unfair to the great majority of soldier settlers and they express a singular lack of understanding of all that has been done by successive governments to overcome undue hardships which have confronted those who are established under the Soldier Settlement Act. I am quite prepared at all times to make inquiry into individual cases where it can be shown that there has been unfair treatment, but the generality of the resolutions you have submitted makes individual identification impossible. I trust, however, that the foregoing will place some of these matters in a more favourable light.

In commenting upon that reply, I would say that the soldier settlement officials are bound by government policy to make those collections; and as soon as government policy is fixed, I believe the officials, including the director and his assistants, will be only too glad to conform with any policy which may be adopted by the government. In the very near future we shall have a number of the men and women who are serving overseas coming back to settle on the land, so that I