

16 per cent, and 2,723 had no interest whatever in their farms. In other words, 2,723 men were staying on the land, wondering from day to day when the director would order them off or take some other action.

That is what we have done for the men who served in the last war. Further breaking this down, we find that 3,801 men, or 52 per cent of the settlers remaining on the land, have an average equity of not more than 16 per cent. Some say it is not good business to look back, but I am looking back and once more bringing before this house the question of the settlement of soldiers after the last war, for the express purpose of seeing that the men and women who come back from the present war are not treated in the same way. I hope hon. members of this house will see to it that when the men and women come back from the present war they are given better treatment.

One of the things that has hurt me time and again is the statement I have heard on various occasions that many returned soldiers from great war No. 1 enlisted in this war because they could not make a living for their wives and families, and saw a way of keeping the wolf from the door by going into the army again and getting the government allowances. But we find that under an order in council passed by this government part of those allowances has been held back and paid over to the soldier settlement board to apply on the debts of these men. Apparently the board would much rather have the ready cash, which rightfully belonged to the wives and families of the men who enlisted, than take a chance on the crops grown on the land, on which the debt was due. The government figures that there is still some \$30,000,000 that may be recovered from the soldier settlers who have remained on the land. Up to the end of March, 1941, the cost of administration of this scheme amounted to \$25,910,495, approximately \$1,250,000 a year. During the period between 1919 and 1941 the government admitted that they had made a mess of the soldier settlement scheme, and proceeded from time to time by six different operations to bring down the debt against those people, and in that way to keep them on the land as long as possible. First of all they brought about a consolidation of loans, then a cancellation of interest charges, then a revaluation of land, then in 1930 a 30 per cent reduction, then a dollar for dollar bonus, and finally the benefits of the Farmers' Creditors Arrangement Act. Total deductions through these six methods I have mentioned

amounted to \$47,518,215. If things keep on like this, I do not know what is going to happen. We are told that \$30,000,000 can still be salvaged; and while \$30,000,000 is but a drop in the bucket in paying for and prosecuting the present war, so that things may be made better for the rest of us in Canada, I feel that that \$30,000,000 does not begin to balance the misery and suffering endured by those men, their wives and families up to the present time.

On other occasions I have advocated that those who have fought against weather elements and other obstacles and stayed on the land up to the present should be given a clear title to the land. The government has not taken notice of that suggestion. Knowing what happens when a person has to pay five per cent interest, having paid seven or eight per cent myself on many occasions, and knowing the condition of farmers generally, I am now asking for something else namely, that those who have paid an amount equal to fifty per cent of the original debt, whether principal or interest, be given a clear title to their land. The men and women who are administering the act could be put to far better purpose in furthering our war effort, or, as one of my neighbours has suggested, in growing sugar beets, so that we would not have to have so many employed by the ration board. Those who had not paid in fifty per cent, or who would not be covered by that provision, would be placed on the same basis as those affected by the Veterans' Land Act. That is, they would have at least a fifty per cent equity in the land. In some cases this would mean a drastic reduction. But for heaven's sake let us clear the blot of the old soldier settlement board off our Canadian statute book. Give those people a break now, even though it is too late.

When I came to Ottawa a week ago there were so many of our forces on the train that it was almost like a troop train. There were members of all branches of the services, and a finer, cleaner and healthier group of young people you would not see anywhere. I discussed with some of the men their occupations before joining, their reasons for joining, and other matters. And in that connection I should like to place on *Hansard* a poem which was sent to the *Western Producer* by Eric A. Dowson, Runciman, Saskatchewan, because it describes very well the position of the diners who were in the dining car as we came east. This poem is entitled *The Diner*, and is in these words: