

conclusion: That before the Dominion could interest itself in private lands, or in provincial crown lands, those lands must be brought to such a state of clearing; to such a state of suitability for agriculture from the point of view of roads, of even schools, and ordinary settlement advantages as would put them on a parity with the Dominion crown lands of the West upon which we loan. If they were brought to such a stage that a man could go on that land, and do as the farmer does upon ordinary land,—use his lumber and the like, and by living on it make a livelihood—then we offer no discouragement at all, we help him all we can; but we do not set ourselves up as an institution, using for the purpose the capital of Canada, to bring stump land, or any other land, into ordinary settlement conditions.

Mr. H. A. MACKIE: What is this Government going to do for the returned soldier in the case of Alberta where the provincial government refuses to take advantage of a federal loan in connection with the housing problem?

Mr. MEIGHEN: One course would be to wait until the provincial government has changed its mind. I do not think we can have a separate policy in that regard.

Mr. H. A. MACKIE: My information is that the Alberta Government has declined to take advantage of the loan. In that event, what is the policy of the Dominion Government on the housing problem in the interest of the returned soldier in Alberta?

Mr. MEIGHEN: My answer still stands. No other course has been decided upon, or is open to us, except that of treating all the provinces alike.

At one o'clock the Committee took recess.

The Committee resumed at three o'clock.

The CHAIRMAN: When the House rose we had reached clause 2, definitions. Shall clause 2 carry?

Mr. McKENZIE: The minister had not quite finished his statement at one o'clock. I intended asking him a few questions before he goes into the further details of the Bill. Could he tell us, first, what land owned by the Government, they intend to utilize in connection with this soldier settlement, stating the area in each province; and also what land, if any, the Government has purchased, its location, and the price per acre.

Mr. MEIGHEN: The hon. member's question has to do with the purchase of land, and intimates an assumption that we buy land and then hold it for sale to the soldiers. That is not the principle followed.

Mr. McKENZIE: I understood the minister to say that that was done.

Mr. MEIGHEN: I will explain. We do buy land and resell it to soldiers, but the plan of operation is to allow the soldier to select his land first—not from the land we own, but wherever he wants it. He selects his farm, he comes to an arrangement as to what he is prepared to pay, and then the office of the board is, through its inspector, to see that he is not paying too much and, if necessary, to have the price reduced before the board will itself purchase the land. The price having been brought down to a satisfactory basis, the board buys the land for the soldier and accompanies the purchase by a resale agreement to him. We do not buy areas of land and trust to its being suitable for soldiers. It may be that we have on hand some areas that we bought, but I do not think we have. I do not think the board is to-day the owner of any land that has not been selected and already purchased by soldiers.

Of course, it would be incorrect to say that we have now no land for soldiers, for we have Crown lands of various kinds. Throughout the Prairie Provinces, of course, all the homestead land is available for them, and that still runs into many millions of acres, but it is not to any extent close to railways and at the same time suitable for agriculture. But, over a year ago, we reserved from homestead settlement all land within fifteen miles of a railway, and it is on that land that the soldier alone has been able to settle since. We reserve other parcels of land, wherever asked for, for special disposition to soldiers. Where a number of soldiers want to settle together, while we cannot hinder them, yet we do not offer them any help if they are going to settle on the community system and all assume the burden of the conditions. We do not encourage that system and have nothing to do with any such community. We do, however, permit them to gather in communities if they wish to work together and buy and sell together on the co-operative plan, but we insist in every case on individual responsibility to the board itself, and we see that every individual soldier gets the full value of his money so far as that money is supplied by the board.