

REMOVAL OF LIENS ON HOMESTEADS

Evidence was heard by the Committee indicating that many settlers on Crown lands were encountering difficulties in connection with liens charged against their land, representing considerable amounts owed by previous occupants for various benefits received in the form of seed grain, Provincial or Municipal relief.

Representations were made that, in the case of ex-service men, these liens should be removed. The Committee learns, however, that these charges are statutory under the Dominion Lands Act; and that the consent of Provinces would be required in regard to any legislative changes affecting their rights.

The Committee is informed, however, that in order to meet this situation a Seed Grain Board has been formed in each Province, comprising a representative of the Dominion Government, the Provincial Government, and the municipality, whose function is to investigate all cases where objection is raised to the amount of the lien. This Board has power to adjust or remit charges of this nature.

The Committee recommends that ex-service men having difficulty in regard to liens on their property of this nature should take steps to bring their cases to the attention of The Seed Grain Board.

No legal assistance is required in this connection and, should any ex-service man be uncertain as to how to proceed, he should submit his case to the Dominion Service Bureau of The Canadian Legion at Ottawa.

AREA "A"

Certain witnesses complained that a large area of Crown lands in southern Saskatchewan and Alberta was being withheld from homestead entry excepting to those who were already located within nine miles of the land upon which it was desired to make entry.

The explanation for this restriction is that this area, officially known as Area "A," is subject to drought over long periods and successive settlement efforts have succumbed to this condition. Legislation was then passed, withdrawing the whole area from homestead entry. Later concessions were made, but only to those who have already demonstrated ability to farm in this area, under the conditions mentioned.

In view of the fact that these lands will shortly come under Provincial control, your Committee is of the opinion that future disposal will be a matter for the Provincial Governments to decide.

CONCLUSION

Before concluding this report, the Committee desires to again emphasize certain fundamental features of the soldier settlement scheme which, while intended for the benefit of the settler, have undoubtedly had a retarding influence on the progress of a large number and make it impossible to regard the scheme as an ordinary business undertaking.

The established loaning practice in Canada, after long years of experience is based on certain very definite considerations. To obtain a loan from a mortgage, insurance, or trust company, or a private lender, the borrower must have at least a 50 per cent equity in his land; he must own his stock and equipment, free of any extensive indebtedness; he should have personal experience as a farmer; his character as a responsible citizen is also considered. In connection with soldier settlement, Parliament instructed that practically all of these considerations should be overlooked. A large proportion of the settlers,