

favour of the pre-emption clause in the Consolidated Land Bill which was brought down, and I have no reason to believe that the government has changed on that point. For my part, I was a supporter of that feature, and am still in favour of it. That Bill provides that the present settler in the Northwest shall be given opportunity to become possessed of a farm of not only 160 acres but 320 acres. Let me give, very briefly, my reasons for favouring this plan. In the first place, we must admit that the best land, speaking generally, is gone. Of course, there is a great deal of good land left, and not homesteaded? I am not trying to give a black eye to the land not taken up—but there is no denying that, generally speaking, the choice land has been taken, as is only natural. Therefore, it is to be considered whether there is not an arrangement to be made by which a man, if he cannot get as good land as the homesteader of the past got, many receive more of the land that is not so valuable. And we say that it is to be given on residence duties as proposed, with the payment of \$3 an acre, that removes any objection that may be raised that the land is going to the speculator. As I am on that subject, I wish to say what my opinion is in reference to the pre-emption clause. My hon. friend from Brandon brought this subject up. I have no hesitation in saying, as a western man, and one in touch with western conditions, that the opposition to this provision of the measure comes from the great land speculators of the west. Let me read an article from the Regina 'Standard,' which hon. gentlemen opposite, no doubt, will listen to with great respect—and, on the point referred to I think the 'Standard' is right. I read from the issue of March 5:

Hon. Frank Oliver's new land measure, which was mentioned in the Speech from the Throne in the House of Commons—

I am not sure they are right about that.

—and which is shortly to be up for consideration, was the subject of discussion, it is learned, at a meeting of a number of business men at the city hall yesterday afternoon, at which John Ridington, formerly of the Winnipeg 'Free Press,' but now representing the corporations interested, and attached to the staff of the Pearson Land Company, dealt with the pre-emption provisions of the Bill and endeavoured to work up a feeling against these pre-emption clauses with a view to having pressure brought to bear on Mr. Oliver, through letters to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, to break the determination of the Minister of the Interior to have the pre-emption clauses inserted. Mr. Ridington's mission was not crowned with much success, apparently, for the meeting broke up without any action being taken and the whole question was referred to the business men's committee of the board of trade.

It is gathered that Mr. Ridington's main objection was to the pre-emption clauses of the Oliver Land Bill.

I could read you other reports and items from the public press which go to show that this opposition comes from the great land speculators. I myself was waited upon by a gentleman, who, I think, is the largest land dealer in Winnipeg, and he asked me to give my opposition to these Bills. He said: With all our thousands and tens of thousands of acres of land, if the Dominion government is going to throw open the odd-numbered sections to enable men to get their quarter-section by means of pre-emption, it would ruin our market. I remember his saying to me: If the government must give the settler another 160 acres, don't talk about \$3 an acre; we want \$15 an acre for our land, and when you talk about \$3 an acre it makes people say our price is ridiculous. I could cite many cases of men identified with the land interest in the west, having taken a similar view to that of my hon. friend from Brandon, that the pre-emption feature should not be carried out, but that the land should be kept only for the individual homesteader. There is this also to be remembered that previously when homesteaders went into that country they had the privilege of purchasing another quarter-section in addition to their homestead from the railway company or the Hudson Bay Company. That privilege is now gone. The railway lands are nearly all sold, the Hudson Bay lands are virtually all sold, so I have no hesitation in saying, speaking only for myself, that for these reasons, the hon. member for Brandon (Mr. Sifton) to the contrary notwithstanding, the pre-emption clause should stand.

Mr. SPROULE. That is the pre-emption clause of \$3 an acre?

Mr. KNOWLES. Yes, with settlement duties in connection. I am in favour of that and wish to be judged accordingly. In the administration of lands in the Northwest the government, I think, should not be too afraid of exercising generosity to the settlers. It is a matter of pride to me personally, without wishing to bring politics into this discussion that this government has never given away an acre of land to a railway company, or any other company except in the case of that bargain, which in my opinion was a good bargain, with the Saskatchewan Valley Land Company, under which that company undertook to settle lands that before that time had been barren. Apart from that they have sold no land to any land company or for that matter have sold no land at all.

Mr. SPROULE. What about the land they gave to ranching companies at a dollar an acre, one-fifth of all their holdings?

Mr. KNOWLES. My hon. friend is mistaken. No land was sold to a ranching company at \$1 an acre.