

*The Address—Mr. Leader*

Now this convention goes on record as being in favour of legislation which will prevent such persons from buying further farm lands until the end of the war.

I am sorry that circumstances did not permit me to attend the house when the Veterans' Land Act was being passed. I am deeply interested in that measure. Out of my concern to do what I can to further the war effort, if you will, but certainly to make conditions better after the war, I wanted to tackle something that I knew something about. I thought I might be able to offer some advice in regard to reestablishment of our soldiers on the land. The terms of that bill are generous, and if it is properly administered it should prove a blessing to those whom we place on the land. In order that it may do so, three things are essential. The first is proper selection of the applicants. Do not try to fit round pegs into square holes, or vice versa; see that the man has had practical farming experience before he is placed on the land. Unless that first requisite is observed he will never make good. I know that in other days some green men have come to Canada and made good on the land. But conditions now are altogether different. A second essential is that the men should be placed on productive soil, purchased at prevailing values. I discussed this at a meeting at Portage la Prairie, and I said that I believe the board which they are setting up or had set up should be purchasing land now, or at any rate getting options on it, because many of these boys are returning home. The last figure I got was about sixty thousand.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): It is now seventy thousand.

Mr. LEADER: Seventy thousand have been discharged from the army now. Not all are applicants for farms, of course, but many of them would like to get started on a farm right away. So that the directors should get busy and secure some land now. Someone will say that if the government starts buying land now it is bound to boost the price. I told our people at the meeting that we are now controlling the prices of farm products and other commodities, and if you can do that you can control the price of land. Tell them the price of this land must revert to the values placed upon it in 1939 and we will send an arbitrator out to see if that is a fair price.

These farms should be located in improved districts. There is no reason whatever for opening up new districts in this country, especially with our returned men. There is plenty of land available in every municipality, in western Canada at least. Speaking for my own municipality, there are hundreds of farms that

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can be purchased at current values on which they would be glad to have our soldier boys reestablished. And if they are placed in improved districts the soldier settlers can have the advantage of hydro power, which is exercising the minds of so many of our public men at the present time. These men must be placed on good farms; the buildings should be constructed along roads on which hydro power and other advantages can be made available.

This board or the directors should work in cooperation with three agencies. First of course is the director himself. Next is the provincial government. Most important of all is the municipality, because it gets closest to the people. The municipalities have all the data available, or would have on very short notice. They know where the good lands are. They know who wants to sell, and they know the value. The director should go to the offices of the municipalities and get lists of lands and other information in order to be able to make proper selection and valuation. If these principles are observed our returned men will have the benefit of hydro power and other advantages.

In regard to old age pensions, I am glad to note that nearly every hon. member who speaks on this subject agrees that pensions to old people are inadequate. This view is not held by any particular group; it is held by hon. members in all groups, and it is held by me. In Portage la Prairie we passed a resolution. I have not a copy of it here but speaking from memory it was to this effect: Resolved that the old age pension should be increased to \$25 a month and the age limit lowered to sixty-five years. How can people live on \$20 a month? In this house I brought out the information that we have paid lawyers \$400 a day and granted them \$20 a day living allowance in addition. But the pioneers who built this country are expected to live on \$20 a month; in fact I know some who are getting as little as \$8 a month because the wife happens to have a small amount of money in the bank and they figure that the interest should be deducted from the pension.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Bow River): It is a shame.

Mr. LEADER: I have a resolution passed by the union of Manitoba municipalities. It is long and I shall not read it all, but there is one paragraph I should like to read:

And whereas this convention feels that the age limit for old age pensioners should be reduced to sixty-five years and the maximum pension to old age pensioners and blind persons increased to \$25.