

Settlers in Rouyn District

this, the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gordon) said that these complaints had come from people other than those who had been settled by the federal government. To-day I have received complaints again, and every one of the settlers concerned has been assisted by the federal government as well as by the provincial authorities and the municipality. This matter is of the utmost importance and I would direct the attention of the house and of the country to the condition of these poor people who are now in dire distress. Depending on them are babies and young children who have no milk.

The Minister of Labour, the day after I brought this matter up, read the following telegram which he said he had received from Mr. J. E. Laforce, who acts for the Canadian National Railways on the committee with respect to this work:

Relative statement the Gazette this morning. No families back to land were placed Rouyn or immediate surroundings. No back to land families province Quebec in distress provided they have shown willingness to work.

J. E. Laforce.

The day before the minister read that telegram to the house I had read a telegram received from Mr. Marcel Essiambre. I will now read the letter I received from this man. I regret very much that I have not an English translation at hand, but I may say that the letter has been sworn to before a commissioner of the superior court. It speaks for itself:

(Translation)

I, Marcel Essiambre, previously residing in Montreal, married and father of nine children, residing at Rivière-Solitaire since October 6 of last year—

Mr. CASGRAIN (Translation): Where is Rivière-Solitaire situated? In what district?

Mr. POULIOT (Translation): In the county of Pontiac, twenty miles from Rouyn.

—do hereby swear on the Holy Bible and make the following statement:

On October 6 last, I left Montreal to establish myself at Rivière-Solitaire, as a settler. On October 26, my wife and my nine children joined me there. I had to pay \$15 for the transfer of my household effects from Ville-Marie to Rivière-Solitaire. Instead of delivering them on my lot, the driver spread them over a distance of about 12 miles. In connection with this transfer I lost for at least \$100 worth of my household effects, namely, two large boxes containing new clothes which we had purchased before leaving and which were to last, at least, over two years; I also lost a mattress. No one ever reimbursed us for this serious loss. My lot is situated at a distance of half a mile from the highway. The road leading to it was cleared, that is the trees were cut, but the road bed is soft. Therefore, it is impossible to reach my lot with a summer vehicle; however, it can be reached with a

[Mr. Pouliot.]

"log-sled" (a kind of a sled made of logs which is dragged along the ground). Since our arrival here, we have, so to speak, no mail service, that is, any one coming from Rouyn brings us our mail. Last Sunday, Mr. Leroux, the parish priest notified us in his sermon that, in the future, those who wanted their mail, would have to get it themselves at Rouyn, as he did not intend to bring it any more.

I have not been able, for more than fifteen days, to obtain goods from the store of Mr. Bellehumeur, at Rivière-Solitaire. My account amounts to \$421.53, the balance completing the \$500, I am told (Mr. Joseph Morin, who is one of the agents of colonization here, so informs me) is held to cover the travelling expenses to this place, of my family and myself, also to cover the freight rate on my household effects. Yet, previous to my departure from Montreal, I was informed at the C. P. Ry. offices, Windsor station, that our train fare and freight for household effects would be free of charge. I am charged seven fares at \$10 each, or \$70. The only food we have had in the house, since fifteen days, for my wife, children and myself, is flour. To-day, I arrived at Rouyn on foot, after having walked 32 miles, in order to obtain some work. As we had not eaten anything, I had to beg for my food. My friend and myself, have enough for another meal before returning, on foot, to Rivière-Solitaire, as no work can be had at Rouyn.

I now appeal to Mr. Jean-François Pouliot, M.P., and ask him to draw the attention of the House of Commons to the sad plight of my family and myself and to request the government to supply us with food.

I know a number of families who are also starving; the following are the names of a few of them, all residents of Rivière-Solitaire.

Names of families: 1. Octave Laroque; 2. Amable Laroque; 3. Joseph Levasseur; 4. William Laviolette; 5. Jérémie Trépanier. There are many others who have no food whatsoever.

I would request the government to send an inspector here, you will then be able to judge whether I have given false evidence. Many of us are in a weak state and unless the government acts immediately, there will be deaths to register.

I sign,

Marcel Essiambre,
Rivière-Solitaire, Témiskaming,
(Signed) Marcel Essiambre.

Sworn before me, this 25th day of April, 1933.

(Signed) Nelson Pinder,
(Justice of the Peace for the
district of Pontiac).

Note.—I have an infant 8 months old to whom milk is refused.

(Signed) Marcel Essiambre.

I forwarded this letter to the hon. Minister of Labour enclosing also mine which is as follows:

Ottawa, April 28, 1933.

Honourable W. A. Gordon,
Minister of Labour,
Ottawa, Ont.
Dear Mr. Gordon:

Referring to your statement of yesterday (Hansard, p. 4644) on the condition of settlers