

Supply—Veterans Affairs

should apply to Indians on the reserve where the land is held in common in any event. The most that the Indian has is a ticket, as it is called, which more or less guarantees him the possession of that particular piece of land and enables him to leave it to his direct heirs, if he has any. I do not think it is a limitation which should be kept in force. If it is in fact still in force, which is what I want to find out, I suggest to the minister it should be removed so far as these people are concerned. I was one who was strongly in favour of the amendment to the act to make it possible for our Indian veterans to take advantage of small holdings. Originally, under the provisions of the act respecting Indian reserves, they were not able to take ownership of land. I am rather disappointed that more of our Indians have not been able to take advantage of these provisions. What the various reasons may be, I do not know.

I would recommend to the department and to the Department of Mines and Resources that any of our Indians still eligible for benefits under the Veterans Land Act should be encouraged to take advantage of those benefits. All hon. members know that the general situation of Indians in Canada is deplorable, and any scheme of this sort which they could take advantage of would be worth while. When the legislation already exists, and the opportunity exists, I suggest every encouragement should be given to them to take advantage of its provisions.

Mr. Gregg: I agree most heartily with the hon. member and shall discuss the matter with the Minister of Mines and Resources. Should any case come to my hon. friend's attention that could be remedied, I should be pleased to have him bring it to my attention.

Item agreed to.

Soldier Settlement and Veterans Land Act—

550. To provide for the reduction of indebtedness to the director of soldier settlement of a settler under the Soldier Settlement Act, in respect of a property in his possession, the title of which is held by the director, by an amount which will reduce his indebtedness to an amount in keeping with the productive capacity of the property and his ability to repay his indebtedness to the director, under regulations approved by the governor in council, \$150,000.

Mr. Quelch: This provision is in lieu of a grant of free title to soldier settlers. When we were dealing with the first item I asked the minister a question to which I did not receive a clear answer. I am familiar with a number of cases where local supervisors have called upon veterans and have come to agreements respecting reductions in

amounts of debts. A veteran may have agreed that he will pay so much cash at the time, and that after harvest he will make another payment to pay off the balance. If the second payment is made the veteran gets clear title, but if he is not able to make that second payment the amount of indebtedness goes back to the original amount, and the amount he has paid can be returned to him.

Where a veteran is not able to complete an agreement by making a second or third payment, owing to crop failure, is it the policy of the department to extend the agreement for another year, or does the agreement automatically die and the amount of the indebtedness go back to the original amount?

Mr. Gregg: I believe I am correct in saying that, as in many other things, the director under the Veterans Land Act has given a great deal of latitude to his district superintendents. An amount has been estimated that could be apportioned to the various districts. The district superintendents who are familiar with local situations and know the settlers under the soldier settlement board attempt to carry out the intention of this particular item.

I can assure the hon. member that the whole matter will be open to negotiation at any time. It has been explained to me, when talking with men working in the fields, that there would be another side contract under which it would be understood that a settler would be getting in some money when he sold his crops, and he would say, "If you will keep it open, I will be able to pay so much this fall, and probably so much next fall." I can assure my hon. friend however that this new contract does not cover any long period of time. It is just for a short period to see if the settler cannot take some part in the final liquidation of his land.

Mr. Quelch: There is every possibility that there may be a crop failure this fall so that the veteran could not complete his agreement. I want to know whether the debt will go back to the original amount, or whether he is given another chance for another year so that he would not lose the benefit of the agreement. I agree that the reductions being made are substantial. A veteran does not wish to lose the chance of having the debt reduced just because of a crop failure, and his not being able to pay the second half.

Mr. Gregg: There are not very many of those cases and, in the second place, as reported at page 626 of *Hansard*, it will be seen that my hon. friend asked a question and I replied that the matter would be taken into consideration. I did that with the