

*Soldier Settlement Act*

county court judge upon due notice, and the proceedings should be so simple that there should be no necessity of a lawyer appearing on either side. Let the proceeding be summary and quick, but at the same time thorough. It might be possible to have some system afterwards of bringing an appeal before a court composed of all, but I hope that would not be necessary. That would be cumbersome and slow, and if such a board existed, I am afraid it would be always or nearly always resorted to.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): A review would involve a stated case on the part of the board and on the part of the soldier. There would be a difficulty there.

Mr. MEIGHEN: There would be no difficulty in stating the case. You would simply state the value; each side would append his reasons for that value, and the judge would probably want to hear some evidence in that case. But it is a precaution that is essential and I would think, if it existed, if each side knew that that precaution was there, there would be very few cases in which there would be any variation of the reduction made by the judge.

This general outline of a constructive suggestion I advance and I advance it with some timidity because I know the whole problem is difficult of solution. If I were to face it in view of one or two individual criticisms, I would say this: There is no provision for this class of cases where a considerable amount has been paid by way of reduction of the advance and where the tribunal would find that the depreciation represented a larger total than the balance owing. I do not doubt there will be many cases, perhaps hundreds of that kind. Is the man then to be given something back by the board?

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): We did not insert any provisions; we are leaving that pretty largely to the discretion of the board simply to deal with the men who are on land.

Mr. MEIGHEN: It is essential that there be such a provision. You cannot get away without it. You have either to make a provision that, in the event of the amount of the depreciation being greater than the amount owing, the man is to get that back from the board, or else that amount of depreciation shall in no case be found to be greater than the amount owing. The latter would seem to me to be the necessary, although in some senses an unfair, clause to put in the bill.

[Mr. Meighen.]

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): Would that not lead on to another stage at which you would have to deal with a man who really is off the land?

Mr. MEIGHEN: I was just about to say that this latter suggestion is to my mind necessary, namely, that no depreciation should ever be allowed greater than the balance owing. And it would be necessary, although unfair, because if you put it the other way then you would certainly be obliged to pursue the same principle further and restore the depreciation to those who have paid in full. There are in the proposals other minor defects which it seems to me it would be inappropriate to labour now.

Mr. FORKE: This is a very important matter. I have been receiving a great many letters, as I have no doubt most hon. members have done, telling heartrending stories about the struggles in which soldier settlers have found themselves in the matter of payment upon their land. I trust that we shall give to this matter the very best consideration and make the most satisfactory arrangement which it is possible for parliament to arrive at. I have listened with a good deal of pleasure to the remarks of the leader of the opposition (Mr. Meighen) and with the exception of a few of the little thrusts which I suppose he could not help making at the government his speech on the whole has, I think, been beneficial and helpful in solving this most important question. I do not see why we should be tied down to anything in the resolution in relation to the board which will finally adjudicate upon the value of the land. The valuation of land is one of the most difficult problems to be encountered in connection with agriculture inasmuch as land values vary so much in different localities and according to the geographical situation of the land. The question is also affected by considerations of transportation facilities and other factors that enter into the value of lands.

As regards the final appeal, I listened with a good deal of interest to the remarks of the hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. Hannesson). I want to assure that hon. gentleman that, speaking for myself personally as a member of the Progressive party, I am not particularly wedded to any one method so long as it is the best method we can devise of finding out the proper valuation of the lands. A number of years ago it was my privilege, or rather my duty, to value lands in the province of Manitoba, and there was no appeal from the valuation which I made in conjunc-