

solving it in the best possible interest of the Federal treasury. It is for the Senate to take this responsibility. I bring the Bill before the House with the sanction of the Cabinet, which is the executive of Parliament. Undoubtedly a sacrifice is being made. It is possible that, in part, it is inevitable, inasmuch as an additional number of those 12,000 soldiers may ultimately be unable to meet their obligations. It is said that this relief will give them hope for the future.

There is perhaps another angle from which this problem might have been approached and solved, but it is not now under consideration. With the exception of my honourable friend, the committee has reported unanimously. As I am quite sure every member of the committee realized, this Bill may not seem just to all returned soldiers; for instance, those who took farms, but were obliged to abandon and sacrifice their property because their burden was too heavy to carry. They may feel that they have reason to complain of unfair treatment on the ground that, if the Government had acted as generously towards them as it is to-day acting towards others, they would not have been deprived of their farms. Yet the committee of the House of Commons seems to have studied this matter very seriously and to have examined it thoroughly from all sides, and, as I have said, it has presented a unanimous report. I cannot say that it meets with my full approval, but it is presented to us in the late hours of the session, and after the examination that I have been able to make of it, particularly in the committee this morning, I will not hesitate to recommend it to the Senate.

Hon. Mr. BLACK: In order to keep this matter straight, may I be permitted to place on Hansard the numbers of men in the different classes? In classes 1 and 2 there are 7,400 soldier settlers. They are in good standing. In class No. 3 there are approximately 3,000. They are in arrears, but are considered to be in fairly good standing. There are 1,600 that are regarded as hopeless cases.

Hon. Mr. WILLOUGHBY: Honourable members, I rise but to make a very few remarks. As has been pointed out by both honourable gentlemen who have preceded me, we are confronted with a most difficult situation arising from the war. We have had to deal with it also in connection with pensions and the adjustments made in favour of the burnt-out soldier.

People who live in the West know that during the past few years there have been more financial fatalities in the farming com-

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND.

munity than people in the East can realize. Last year produced among the farmers a large crop of financial failures—men who will lose their farms absolutely, or who are carrying on at present by virtue of the leniency of their landlords, if they are tenants, or of mortgage companies, if they are owners. The Government of Saskatchewan has been advancing large sums of money for assistance in purchasing food for the family and feed for the stock. The municipalities, too, have taken a hand in this matter. The Government has also guaranteed the advances on seed grain. This being so, I am not surprised that in some respects the financial position of the soldier settler last year became materially worse than it was before.

The situation is most unfortunate, but I have not seen any better solution than the one to be found in the report submitted by the Commons committee. It is true that the whole plan could be scrapped and a liquidation made, but I do not know how the Government could release itself from its obligation. It is possible, as has been suggested, that the work could be turned over to another department and that we could then proceed against those of the 12,000 soldiers who are reasonably successful. Purchasers might be found; but there would still remain the obligation to the British Government under the settlement scheme involving the sending of 3,000 families to this country. I am not sure that that would be the right action to take. I am afraid that we must pay the penalties of engaging in a war. We have tried to assist our soldiers, and we must look after the soldier settlers and not try to rid ourselves of the liability. I regret as much as anybody the enormous sacrifice that we have to make in this matter, but from what I have heard I believe the committee gave the best and most sympathetic consideration possible to the matter, and I for one am going to support the findings of the committee.

Hon. ROBERT FORKE: As the Minister in charge of this Department for three years, I may claim to have a rather intimate knowledge of the whole situation. I would point out first that the position of the Minister of Immigration in regard to the Soldier Settlement Board is a rather anomalous one. The Minister of Immigration is the Minister who is responsible to Parliament for the administration of that Board, but the Soldier Settlement Act gives the Board power to do a great many things without consulting the Minister.

Thirty thousand soldiers were put on the land when they came back from the front.