

has been put on either to get the soldier settler to pay up or get off. If you treat your new veterans in that way you may look for chaos, and plenty of it, in Canada because the new veterans will not take the treatment handed out to the old ones, and so far as I am concerned I hope to do my share to see that the new men receive better treatment.

The minister might have pointed out some other benefits that have been extended in connection with these lands, but I think we have successful answers to any arguments he may advance. I would point out that thirty-nine per cent of the credit extended to the new veterans will be given as a grant if for the first ten years they keep up their payments. At the end of March, 1944, the old settlers owed only twenty-nine per cent of their original average debt. Why in the world can we not square that off and give them a clear sheet? At the present time the average age of these settlers is close to sixty, and I have had letters from several who are over eighty. I have not pointed out that recently the government sent out to these people forms on which they might make application to have their loans renewed or the period of payment extended for up to another twenty years. Can one imagine a man eighty, eighty-five or eighty-eight years of age signing a contract which will oblige him to keep on paying for his quarter-section of land until he is over a hundred years old? Again I ask for a good business administration to take these matters into consideration.

As has been pointed out by the minister, under the Veterans' Land Act the rate of interest is $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. Let us not forget that under the old soldier settlement board the interest on the current debt was five per cent, and as soon as they went into arrears they paid seven per cent. I say again that if the reduction in interest had been made retro-active these old settlers would have been paid up years ago and would not have had to come to the government here, as they did last year, asking for clear title.

Some persons have an idea that they are asking for something for nothing. This is not a matter of my own interests. I am not a soldier settler; all the land I have I bought. In the interests of Canada; in the interests of the success of the Veterans' Land Act, and in the interests of our own veterans, the government still has time before dissolution to pass the necessary order in council—they have passed thousands already—to give these men clear title. If the Minister of Mines and Resources and the Minister of Finance will give

[Mr. Fair.]

us their arguments in opposition I think we can take care of them because I do not think they have a leg to stand on. They cannot get blood out of a stone. Let me point out to anyone opposed to the granting of these titles that we are taking money from these old settlers, while in many cases their wives and families need medical, hospital, dental or other care. Do not forget the malnutrition that has prevailed in many of these families, as in many others, during the years these men have been on this land. I know many of us in this house have never seen any hard times. When we go out around the country we live at the best hotels, at the expense of the country. The old soldier settler, however, is trying to make a living off the land, and for heaven's sake, before this parliament dissolves, give him the clear title for which he has been asking on so many occasions.

Mr. CASTLEDEN: Since first entering this house this group has consistently supported this request. The minister's statement this evening proves quite conclusively the sincerity and good will of those people who are still on the land. They would have paid everything if the opportunity had been given them. They have been more than willing to fulfil their obligations, and the government should recognize that fact. During the three years from 1939 to 1941 the actions of this government worked a great hardship on these men and aroused a great deal of resentment. In view of the past contribution of these returned soldiers, who fought in the last war and who now face the declining years of their lives, surely this government, without loss to itself or to the people of Canada, could give them clear title to their land. I am sure this group would give full support to the action of the government in so doing.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Bow River): Just before we leave that subject I should like to add a word to the discussion. I hope the minister will not think we are indulging in any loose sentiments, as he expressed it a while ago I do not intend to repeat the arguments which have been put forward by the hon. member for Battle River, who, I think, presented a sound case. However, it seems to me that the government should go a little farther in the new Veterans' Land Act. I quite agree with everything said by the hon. member for Battle River in regard to the old soldier settlers getting clear title to their land. Let us remember that Alberta has passed legislation to give the returned men of this war who had residence in that province a half-section of land, with clear title