

*Soldier Settlement Act*

again as to the men themselves who are employed in this work. One can find every description of man among the soldier settlers to-day in whatever part of Canada one may go. There are those who had previous knowledge of this kind of work, and others who had not. There are those who have been physically able to throw themselves wholeheartedly into the work and to reap a certain measure of success; while there are others who, while they have endeavoured just as much to attain success have been unable to reach it owing to various circumstances outside their own control. But the provisions of the act have been carried out under both administrations and so far as my experience in British Columbia is concerned, they have been fairly observed. A really earnest attempt has been made on the part of the officials of the board, at least, in Yale of which I can speak, to help the soldiers in their difficulties and to endeavour to assist them in making it go. But they have been met with serious obstacles. I think I am quite right in saying that the officials of the board themselves have foreseen for several years past that a revaluation of land must come but of course, hitherto they have been quite powerless to do anything in that direction. Last year when the question of revaluation of stock and equipment was before parliament there were appeals from all parts of the House to the government to include therein a revaluation of the land. The government was reluctant to undertake this. I remember my right hon. leader (Mr. Meighen) pointing out towards the close of that debate the very thorny question which we should some day have to tackle with regard to this revaluation. The difficulty is no less to-day than it was then. Indeed, if anything it has been rather aggravated by the intrusion into the question of the settlement of British government assisted immigrants.

Now, we do not know for lack of any pronouncement on the part of the government just under what conditions these immigrants are being placed on the land. I remember that the hon. member for Burrard (Mr. Clark) asked the Minister of the Interior (Mr. Stewart, Edmonton) for certain information. If I remember rightly he asked the question on two occasions, and the third time the minister made a reply. I will read what the hon. member for Burrard said in connection with the matter:

May I remind the minister that the vital point of the question was, whether the lands are being turned over to the immigrants at values lower than those originally placed on them for soldier settlement?

[Mr. Stirling.]

And the minister replied:

I asked that question, and in some cases they are turned over at a lower value in the majority of cases, however, they are turned over at the value at which the soldier settler was placed upon the land.

A cartoon has been placed in my hands which was published in a Vancouver paper—what paper I do not know, for its name does not appear on this clipping. It depicts what is called a new settler marching along the high land, with a very small encumbrance on his back and a bright new hoe on his shoulders. The idea one gets from that is that the soldier is making his way to pastures new and is about to make a success of the undertaking. Below on a lower stratum of land there is a soldier settler with a far bigger burden on his back, endeavouring to wheel a heavily laden barrow across some stony land. I do not know whether that cartoon represents the state of affairs, but I think it would be of very great assistance to the House, to the public, and especially to the soldiers themselves if the minister would make a full, ample detailed statement as to where we stand with regard to incoming immigrants. I can imagine no other circumstance making the soldier settler angrier than to feel that he has been pleading with the government for some time for a revaluation, and now to find that certain immigrants are being given a revaluation which he is not able to obtain.

As I say, conditions throughout Canada are most varied, and I want for a few moments to describe the situation of soldier settlement in Yale. In 1919 there was a big crop of fruit, the prices were good, optimism prevailed, and purchases of land commenced at about that date. Not only did fruit lands increase in value, but the optimism carried up the values of mixed farming land and general agricultural land at the same time and all lands, compared with the subsequent prices, were inflated in value. In 1920 there was a smaller fruit crop and the prices were still fairly good. But about that time was injected into this condition of affairs another matter altogether which directly affected land values. For some few years there had been difficulty between the water companies that supplied the irrigation water and the land owners, and that difficulty had become so tense by the end of 1920 that the provincial government stepped in and used its good offices to draw the water companies and the land owners closer together. Negotiations resulted in the forming of what are called irrigation districts, the whole of the water systems, including