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or's Statement

aie St. Paul, C.C., Que. March 27th, 1907. pcum, Limited, Ont.

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INER, GUELPH

LAND GRANTS TO THE S. A VETERANS

Resolutions Introduced in House of Commons to Grant Half-Section Each to Men from Prairie Provinces—Speech of Minister of Interior.

On Feb. 25th the Minister of the Interior introduced the following resolution in the House of Commons:

1. Resolved that it is expedient to authorize the Governor in Council to grant two adjoining quarter sections of Dominion lands available for homestead entry to every volunteer who at the time of his enlistment for military service in South Africa under Her late Majesty Queen Victoria, in 1899, 1900, 1901 or 1902, was resident or domiciled in Manitoba, Saskatchewan or Alberta, or in the Yukon Territory.

2. Resolved, that every such grant shall be subject to the conditions that the grantee, or his duly qualified substitute, shall select and enter for the said two quarter sections in the Dominion lands office for the land district in which they are situated on or before December 31st, 1910; that he shall perfect his entry by commencing actually to reside upon and cultivate the land within six months after the said day ;and that he shall thereafter reside upon and cultivate the land for the period and in accordance with the terms and conditions prescribed by the homestead provisions of the Dominion Lands Act.

3. Resolved, that any person entitled, under the foregoing provisions, to select and enter for either by himself or by his substitute, land as a homestead, may, in lieu thereof, if he or his substitute so choose, receive scrip for $160, which shall be received from the bearer at its face value in payment of any Dominion lands open for sale; provided that any person choosing to take scrip shall notify the Minister of the Interior of his choice on or before December 31st, 1909.

4. Resolved, that every such grant of land or scrip shall be made by the Minister of the Interior, upon a warrant issued in favor of the volunteer entitled thereto, by the Minister of Militia and Defence, which shall be recorded in the Department of the Interior, under section 90 of the Dominion Lands Act; and all such scrip shall be subject in all respects to the provisions of sections 94, 96, 97 and 98 of the Dominion Lands Act.

5. Resolved, that the entries made and the patents issued under the foregoing provisions shall be exempt from all fees and charges exacted in the case of an ordinary homestead entry.

In the course of the debate on the resolution Mr. Oliver spoke as follows (from Hansard):

Mr. OLIVER—I am sure that our friends on the other side are to be congratulated on the generosity with which they have expressed themselves in recognition of the services of the volunteers in South Africa. They are to be congratulated on the number of excellent speeches in that line that have been made to-day—might I suggest, perhaps rather with a view of influencing the opinions of the voters than for the purpose of influencing this discussion? Might I suggest also that their speeches have been made about a year too late to have that desirable effect? Our friends have suggested that the government has not assumed its proper share of responsibility in regard to the proposition before the House.

I would like to say that the government is prepared to absolutely assume the fullest responsibility, but it is not more possible for a member of parliament to relieve himself of his responsibility than for the government. And when this matter was up before the House for discussion last session, our friends, who now find fault with the action of the government, had then the opportunity to express themselves on the subject and did not, and they must be held to their record as not having the proper time and in the proper place given expression to those generous views of which they have been so lavish today. The government was not impelled to take the action it did because of the resolution submitted to the House last session, although that of course is a factor certainly to be considered. Any resolution passed unanimously by this House must have some recognition and some effect in shaping the policy of the government, but it is no secret to the House that this matter is one which has been up for consideration, in one form or another, for a number of years. Pressure has been brought to bear on the government from different sides on behalf of the volunteers, but for reasons which have already been stated, it was not thought desirable to deal with the question until the present and it is now being dealt with, not only in accord with the resolution of the House last year, but also in accord with the resolutions of the Legislative assemblies of the two western provinces more immediately concerned. As to what further resolutions may be passed, that is a matter which may be fairly considered. They are not excluded from consideration because of the passage of this resolution, and may be taken up in the proper place and at the proper time, and if taken up I trust they will receive the fair measure of consideration which this has received. It has been said by some of our friends opposite that this is either a Dominion or a provincial matter. I would like to say that it is both. Then services rendered were rendered to the Empire rather than to the Dominion, but they were, I am free to say, to the Dominion rather than to the provinces. But the question of a special grant of land in recognition of these services naturally and necessarily pertains to that authority which owns and controls the land. That ownership and control rests in certain provinces in the provincial government and in others in the Dominion government, and the Dominion government is leading with this question to-day, not as the government of the Dominion, but as the holder of lands in certain provinces, and is dealing with this question, therefore, as it has been dealt with by some of the other provinces which are the holders of their own provincial lands, and as the legislatures of the new provinces in the west have expressed themselves as desirous it should be dealt with. We are not dealing with the question of the distribution of land generally for services in South Africa, but with the question simply from the standpoint of these particular provinces in which this governmnt owns and controls the land, and are dealing with it from a provincial rather than a Dominion point of view. It will be somewhat surprising to some of our friends in the west when they read the report of this debate and find that the gentlemen who have during the past several years loudly and strongly proclaimed the absolute rights of these western provinces to the ownership and control of their own lands declare here that these lands are absolutely the property of the Dominion, paid for by the Dominion, and to be used for any purpose this government may choose. This doctrine will grate rather harshly on the ears of a good many of the friends of the opposition in that western country. They will be rather surprised when they find what a right about face our hon. friends opposite have so suddenly taken.

Mr. SAM HUGHES—Does the hon. gentleman not distinguish between a question of doctrine and a question of law? It is not a question of doctrine at all, but the minister's own law for which he obtained his portfolio.

Mr. A. A. McLEAN—Does the minister deny that these lands are the property of the Dominion?

Mr. OLIVER—Certainly not.

Mr. A. A. McLEAN—What then does he mean?

Mr. OLIVER—I mean that my hon. friends opposite have campaigned up and down the Northwest declaring that these lands were not the property of the Dominion.

Mr. A. A. McLEAN—I never hear any one making the statement that these lands were not the property of the Dominion. On the contrary it was held by every one that they were. I mean since the Autonomy Bill.

Mr. OLIVER—I do not know just exactly how my hon. friend wants to draw the line between the campaign his friends made in the west before or after a certain date. I am aware, however, that I saw my hon. friend who represents Qu'Appelle (Mr. Lake) taking part in a political campaign in the west, only some three or four months ago, and one of his strong points was that the people of the west had been robbed of their lands.

Mr. LAKE—Hear, hear.

Mr. OLIVER—That is to say that the control which this government exercises over those lands was unjustly acquired and unjustly exercised.

Some hon. MEMBERS—Hear, hear.

Mr. OLIVER—That is not the statement we have heard to-day so frequently from hon. gentlemen opposite, and I repeat that I am afraid that the position so strongly taken and so repeatedly announced by our friends opposite will jar harshly on the ears of their friends in the west when they read the reports of this debate. I do not presume at the moment to define just what the relations are between this government and the people of the Northwest in respect to the lands of the Northwest. But I do take issue with the position I have heard stated to-day that the lands of the Northwest were paid for by the terms of the Autonomy Bill. They were not paid for, or pretended to be paid for, by those terms. The Autonomy Bills provide that there shall be certain money paid by this government to those new provinces in lieu of lands for the expenses of government. That is in lieu of the revenue which might be derived from lands, which money should go towards the expenses of government in these provinces. That is quite a different matter from paying the price of the land, and it is in regard to the value of the land and the price of the land that the discussion has gone on to-day. It is the value of the land, or the actual price of the land, that goes to the volunteer and not the mere taxable value, which was the transaction between this government and the government of the provinces. It is a doctrine that will not be received by our friends in the west when they are told that the subsidy which is agreed to be paid by this government to their governments is a price in payment of their land. That is not an understanding in accordance with the facts and will not be received.

Mr. Sproule—Is it not a price in lieu of their lands because they did not receive those lands from which they might get an income?

Mr. Oliver—It was in view of the revenue which might be derived from the taxation or other disposition of the land, but not in lieu of the value of the land.

Mr. Sproule—Did not the resolution declare that it was in consideration of the fact that these provinces did not get their land and could not revenue from their land, that they were given certain subsidies in lieu of it?

Mr. Oliver—In lieu of the revenue to be derived, but not in lieu of the value of the land.

Now, that point being settled, I wish to deal with another feature of the case. The question of the value of the lands of the west is one that is of interest, no doubt, to every resident of the Dominion; but I think that every one will admit that it is of paramount interest to the people of the west themselves. And the method, the distribution and the prospects of settlement, and the system of settlement, is a matter of paramount importance to the people there, and particularly the question whether there should enter into the value of the lands the element of speculation. And, as an element of speculation certainly must enter into any transaction such as has been placed before the House tonight—any transaction in the way of land grants or scrips for lands—it is natural that the people of the west should look with some degree of care upon any proposition involving the alienation of any considerable portion of Northwest lands on any condition instead of actual settlement.

Mr. Sproule—Do you prove a settlement in this case?

Mr. Oliver—Yes. So, when the people of the west, through their legislative assembly declare themselves in favor of the granting of scrip for lands to a certain class and a certain number of people, that binds them to that principle only so far as they ask it to be applied, and does not bind them to the principle of granting scrip or lands to everybody who, this, that, or the other person might think should be entitled to receive land. Therefore, while I say nothing whatever on the claims which have been put forward here on behalf of those included in the resolutions before the House, I desire to say that there is a radical difference between the resolution of the Northwest assembly in this regard and the propositions or suggestions that have been made from the other side of the House, and that will have to be considered or, I think, in reason ought properly to be considered, entirely separately from those we have placed before the House.

Mr. Bergeron—Woul my hon. friend (Mr. Oliver) be kind enough to tell the House how many in the three provinces will get the benefit of this resolution?

Mr. Oliver—It is only an estimate, of course, but I believe it is placed at between 1,500 and 2,000. While there is every desire to deal with every possible liberality with those who have made sacrifices in the interests of our country and of the empire, it is necessary, of course, always to consider the difficulties of dealing with the situation and the possibilities that are involved in that dealing. That is what I said a few minutes ago—to give special concessions to any person or class of persons without introducing an element of speculation, and, as everybdoy knows, that element is not a desirable element in so far as it can be avoided. Therefore, in approaching this question, and in undertaking to deal with, as we think, a fair measure of liberality, with a certain proportion of the volunteers who went to South Africa, we thought it well to go cautiously and to put ourselves in a position that we could not with fairness be criticized as opening the door more widely to speculation than was absolutely necessary to meet the case. If it be so that the mind of parliament goes further and would justify the government in going further, and ignoring the possibilities of speculation in this regard, that is a matter for further consideration at some other time, but it does not interfere with the position of the present resolution, or the discussion of it.

I wish to refer for a moment to the question mentioned by my hon. friend from Marquette (Mr. W. J. Roche) to the effect, as I understood, that the province of Manitoba had not received justice at the hands of this government in regard to its lands. I have not the exact words of my hon. friend, but I think I understood the point he sought to make. The House should know that, at the present time, the province of Manitoba, as represented by its government, has under consideration a proposal to extend the boundaries of that province, as declaring through its members on the floor of parliament that, unless a cash subsidy is given to the province on the same basis as was given to Saskatchewan and Alberta—as my hon. friend (Mr. Sproule), has said in lieu of the lands—it would be a vile imposition upon the province and a most unjust discrimination against it. In regard to the terms of the resolution, I would like to say that the resolution only contains the salient features of the measure, but that the details will be contained in the bill, and I think my hon. friend from Alberta (Mr. Herron) who has asked certain questions, will find those questions fully answered in the bill if and when it is brought down.

Mr. Lake—Can the substitute do anything more than select and enter for? Must the actual applicant himself perfor the duties?

Mr. Oliver—We have have in mind the previous land grants in recognition of military service in the west. The first of these was in respect of the expeditions in 1869 and 1871 in the Red River rebellion and the next in the case of the rebellion of 1885. In the first case the scrip was for 160 acres; it was transferable and not settlement duties were involved. In 1885 it was thought desirable that advantages should not be given without settlement accompanying these grants. It was provided in 1885 that the person entitled by his services should receive the homestead of 320 acres instead of 160 acres. The pre-emption law was then in force so that the practical result was that the person entitled to scrip received a free pre-emption. He had also the privilege of assigning his right to this homestead of 320 acres so that any person who wished to do settlement duties in order to acquire a homestead and pre-emption could acquire that right by buying from the volunteers and fulfilling these duties.

Mr. Sproule—Does the minister propose that now?

Mr. Oliver—We are going on the principle that grants of land should not be made unaccompanied by settlement and cultivation. We adhere to the principle adopted in 1885, by giving a homestead of 320 acres, requiring the same settlement conditions as in the case of a homestead of 160 acres and allowing the right of assignment so that the volunteer may dispose of his right to another person who, by settlement on the land and fulfilment of the requirements, can acquire a patent to 320.

Mr. Sam Hughes—Is the minister not introducing another Bill giving a homestead of 320 acres?

Mr. Oliver—No.

Mr. Sam Hughes—He did last year.

Mr. Oliver—No.

Mr. Sam Hughes—He had one quarter-section and could acquire another.

Mr. Oliver—By paying for it.

Mr. Lake—The grantee can assign his right to any one whether he has had a homestead or not, absolutely free of the regulations in regard to the first and second homestead.

Mr. Oliver—That is the intention as the Bill is drafted and in that it differs from the scrip of 1885 which did not permit that privilege and in that case the person who already had a homestead only had the right of pre-emption in addition. In this case we do not take cognizance of the previous standing of the assignee. He buys a right and if he fulfils the requirements he gets that right without any question as to other rights he may have under other circumstances.

Mr. Gallagher—How many assignments can be made under that? If the volunteer assigns to Jones and Jones assigns to Brown, then if Brown performs the duty can he acquire his homestead or can there be only one assignment direct to the man who proposes to do the duty.

Mr. Oliver—I would have to get a legal opinion but my impression would be, and I think the intention is, that the volunteer can assign to whoever he pleases and that person can assign to another, passing on the right to assign; but once the last assignee has made his entry for the land he cannot assign and will have to fulfil the duty.

Mr. R. L. Borden—That is what you call a substitute in the regulations?

Mr. Galliher—That would open the door to speculation.

Mr. Oliver—We cannot disassociate this from speculation; when you give a privilege it involves speculation.

Mr. Galliher—You could curtail speculation by allowing only one assignment.

Mr. Oliver—I do not say that we will not be guided by opinion given in the committee. We desire to deal with these volunteers with the utmost liberality, consistent with absolute settlement and cultivation. We do not wish to prevent the volunteer getting out of his land its fullest value. For that reason we give him the full right of assignment and I think it would be just as well to give the free right of assignment until the actual entry has been made.

Mr. Lake—Will this grant go to every volunteer or his legal assigns? For instance, if the volunteer had died in the meantime?

Mr. Oliver—While there is no provision to that effect in the resolution, that could be dealt with and such a clause inserted in the committee if it is agreed by the House.

It may be of interest to the committee that there were 1,558 issues of land grants in the case of the Red River rebellion, and in the case of the Northwest rebellion 1,063 land warrants and 5,125 money scrip notes of $80 each. In the case of the rebellion of 1885 the volunteer was allowed to exchange his right to the land for a scrip note of $80 which he could use in payment for Dominion lands. We have followed that same provision but we have changed the amount to $160.

Mr. Sam Hughes—Does the minister think that land scrip to the amount of $160 is a fair proposition?

Mr. Oliver—Well, I have been following the precedent of the previous arrangement and I though that $80 was certainly too small. I thought it would be fair, at any rate, to double it, and I think there is a good deal to be said against increasing the amount of the scrip to any great degree. What we want is settlement on the land, and if we give a reasonable value for the exchange between land and scrip, I think we are doing fairly well.

Mr. Sam Hughes—We can discuss that when the Bill comes down.

Mr. Herron—Would it be possible to insert an option in the Bill, if a gentleman did not wish to take 320 acres under the corresponding conditions, could it not be arranged that he might be permitted to select a quarter section and get the patent for it in a few months? There are men who would prefer that to receiving 320 acres with settlement duties.

Mr. Oliver—That is a matter that can be discussed in committee on the Bill. There is no doubt that the matter was considered fully in 1885, and, for the reasons which are apparent, it was decided then that it was not advisable to follow the precedent of the scrip land of 1870 and make a grant of 160 acres clear of all duties. If, in 1885, it was not thought advisable to follow the example of the scrip of 1870 giving a free grant, I think it would be looked upon with very much less favor to-day. I think the demand to-day is more strongly for actual settlement in making any land grant than it was even in 1885. We have, at any rate, followed the precedent of 1885 in making this provision and in drafting the Bill.

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VENEZUELA MUST SETTLE.

Washington Sends Note Demanding Arbitration of Asphalt Claims.

Caracas, Venezuela, March 3—A big stick is hovering over Venezuela and the diminutive but obstinate President Castro. W. W. Russell, American minister, has presented to the Venezuelan government a note from Washington, which demands that Venezuela submit for arbitration the famous asphalt claims, which figured so prominently in the recent history of the South American Republic. Demands of a similar character in a milder form have been made before by Washington, but the government and President Castro have succeeded heretofore in dodging the open issue. Venezuela shows no disposition to make any reparation for the injustice which certain Americans claim to have suffered at the hands of the Venezuelans. Minister Russell handed the last note to the foreign minister on Feb. 27th. It is understood that demands of Washington government were a reiteration with no little firmness.

King Goes To England.

Ottawa, March 3.—Mackenzie King, deputy minister of labor, leaves for England Thursday, where he will lay before the Indian and Colonial offices the views of the Canadian government in respect to the Hindu immigration.

To Annul C. H. Lovell's Election.

Sherbrooke, P.Q., March 2.—Proceedings have been taken to annul the election of C. H. Lovell, M.P., in Stanstead. Disqualification is also asked for. The charegs are the usual ones of bribery and corruption.

Painters Want Increase in Wages.

Toronto, March 2.—Painters and decorators demand a maximum wage of 37 1-2 cents an hour, and give the employers until April 15th to grant the increase. The maximum now is 35 cents an hour.

Freight Transfer at Moose Jaw.

Medicine Hat, March 2.—Although no official notification has been received by Supt. Lawrence, it is understood that an order will go into effect on March 1 whereby the transfer of freight to points west on both the Crow and main lines division of the C.P.R. will be done at Moose Jaw instead of at Medicine Hat. At present this will make little or no difference to the staff and the local freight sheds, but in the busy season it means the employment of about a dozen or fifteen additional truckmers and checkers and a couple of clerks. One set of dispatchers have been laid off in Medicine Hat until the railway business picks up, when the Summer schedule goes into effect again on the line. It is expected that the additional passenger service will begin about March 15.

Tragic Death of Switchman.

Grand Forks, B.C., March 3.—Mike Dolan, a switchman, was instantly killed last night at the Granby smelter. His head was cut off by a wheel.

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